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THE  
**Theological and Miscellaneous**  
**WORKS,**  
*&c.*  
OF  
**JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL. D. F. R. S. &c.**  
WITH  
*NOTES,*  
BY THE EDITOR.

---

**VOLUME II.**

Containing  
**The Institutes, Appeal, and Familiar Illustration.**

BX 9815

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TO  
**JOHN CHRISTIE, ESQ.**

**TREASURER OF THE UNITARIAN FUND.**

---

**DEAR SIR,**

**OUR** friendship will, I trust, excuse the liberty I now take, in connecting our names on these introductory pages. Independently, indeed, of the personal gratification this circumstance affords me, it was scarcely possible that I should have formed the design which has given occasion to this volume, without frequently recollecting the hours we have passed together, in the society of valuable Christian friends, endeavouring to promote a more general attention to what we esteem the apostolical *faith in Christ*.

To discover that faith, amidst the many inventions sought out by human ingenuity, and to recommend the profession of it "by labour and patience," through "evil report and good report," these, you well know, were the favourite purposes of my Author, from early youth to latest age, in all the trying scenes through which his life was extended; and as subservient to

these he chiefly valued his well-earned reputation, among the philosophers of his time. Such a preference, you will readily agree with me, was eminently due to the Christianity of the New Testament, which alone can propose to Man, with any satisfactory evidence of their reality, those objects, in the contemplation of which, pain and pleasure, prosperity and disappointment, the varieties which form his condition in the present world, appear to lose all their distinctions.

That you may long continue to enjoy what this world can afford, in the midst of a virtuous and happy family, and with the most satisfying expectation of what cannot be enjoyed till this world shall be no more, is the wish of,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. T. RUTT.

*Clapton, Oct. 19, 1817.*

# PREFACE

## BY THE EDITOR.

---

HAVING appropriated the First Volume to an account of the Life and Correspondence of Dr. Priestley, I now bring before the Subscribers some of the earliest of those publications which comprise his Theological Works.

In preparing this volume for the press, I have endeavoured to bear in mind the obvious duty of preserving my Author's language entire, according to his latest corrections, so far as they could be ascertained. Thus, the variations from former editions, have been strictly confined to the correction of typographical errors, or of such inaccuracies as could be discovered in references, especially to the passages in the Old and New Testament. Those passages also have been corrected, when not verbally exact, according to the Common Version, which the Author evidently designed to follow, having marked them as quotations, and distinguished by italics the different translations which he occasionally adopted. These circumstances were unworthy of notice, except to justify myself to any who may minutely compare the editions; and the existence of such inaccuracies may be fairly attributed to the Author's very intimate acquaintance with the Bible, which might lead him, sometimes, to make his quotations merely from memory.

For the Notes, with the exception of a few, distinguished by the Author's initial, I am solely accountable. They have increased far beyond my expectation. Yet I trust that they are not wholly irrelevant, but will at least evince

is immediately connected with the subjects of the *Appeal*, but does not appear to have been published till some years later. I have, on various passages of Scripture, occasionally referred to the Author's *Notes*, but the reader will, doubtless, do this more generally, for himself.

I cannot close this Preface without recollecting two friends of Dr. Priestley, who were among the earliest encouragers of the design. One was Dr. Disney, with whom I had a long acquaintance. On seeing the first notice of my intention in the *Monthly Repository*, he immediately wrote to me with a hand enfeebled by a tedious disease, proffering his subscription, with a purpose as I understood him, to deposit the works in a public library. The other was Dr. Estlin, with whom I never had the advantage of a personal intercourse; but he obligingly communicated to me his approbation and support of the undertaking, and his solicitude to promote its success. I should gladly have submitted the execution of this volume to the candid judgment of such men, and have indulged the hope of their future assistance. But they are *fallen asleep*, and now admonish us from their regretted tombs, to pursue every worthy purpose with all our might, because "the night cometh in which no man can work."

Under the impression of such considerations, I would proceed to perform my engagement to the Subscribers, with all the expedition which health and leisure will permit.



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**INSTITUTES**  
**OF**  
**NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.**

[First published in Three Volumes 12mo. 1772—1774.]



To which is prefixed,

**A N E S S A Y**

**ON THE**

**BEST METHOD OF COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE  
TO THE MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES.**



*Wisdom is the principal Thing.* **SOLOMON.**



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TO THE  
 YOUNGER PART OF THE CONGREGATION  
 OF  
 PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,  
 AT  
 MILL-HILL, IN LEEDS.



MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

IT was on your account that I composed these *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, and to you I take the liberty to dedicate them. X

It is the earnest wish of my heart, that your minds may be well established in the sound principles of religious knowledge, because I am fully persuaded, that nothing else can be a sufficient foundation of a virtuous and truly respectable conduct in life, or of good hope in death. A mind destitute of knowledge, (and, comparatively speaking, no kind of knowledge, besides that of religion, deserves the name,) is like a field on which no culture has been bestowed, which, the richer it is, the ranker weeds it will produce. If nothing good be sown in it, it will be occupied by plants that are useless or noxious.

Thus, the mind of man can never be wholly barren. Through our whole lives we are subject to successive impressions; for either new ideas are continually flowing in, or traces of the old ones are marked deeper. If, therefore, you be not acquiring good principles, be assured that you are acquiring bad ones; if you be not forming virtuous habits, you are, how insensibly soever to yourselves, forming vicious ones; and, instead of becoming those amiable objects in yourselves, and those valuable members of society, which nature, and the God of nature intended that you should be, you will be at best, useless cumberers of

the ground, a dead weight upon the community, receiving support and advantage, but contributing nothing in return ; or you will be the pests of society, growing continually more corrupt yourselves, and contributing to the corruption of others.

Finding yourselves, therefore, in such a world as this, in which nothing is at a stand, it behoves you seriously to reflect upon your situation and prospects. Form then, the generous resolution (and every thing depends upon your resolution) of being at present what you will certainly wish you had been some years hence, what your best friends now wish you to be, and what your Maker has intended, fitted, and enabled you to be.

Above all things, be careful to improve and make use of the reason which God has given you, to be the guide of your lives, to check the extravagance of your passions, and to assist you in acquiring that knowledge, without which your rational powers will be of no advantage to you. If you would distinguish yourselves as men, and attain the true dignity, and proper happiness of your natures, it must be by the exercise of those faculties which are peculiar to you as men. If you have no higher objects than the gratification of your animal appetites and passions, you rank yourselves with the brute beasts ; but as you will still retain that reflection, which they have not, you will never have that unallayed enjoyment of a sensual life which they have. In fact, you are incapable of the happiness of brute animals. Aspire therefore, to those superior pursuits and gratifications for which you were formed, and which are the prerogative and glory of your natures.

Let me urge you, my younger hearers, to a more than ordinary attention to regularity and propriety of behaviour, becoming men and Christians, that your conduct may be no disgrace to the rational and liberal sentiments which I trust you have imbibed. Let it be seen, that when God is considered as the proper object of reverence, love and confidence, as the benevolent Father of all his offspring of mankind, and their righteous and impartial moral Governor, the principle of obedience is the most ingenuous and effectual. Cherish the most unfeigned gratitude to the Father of lights, that your minds are no longer bewildered with the gloom and darkness, in which our excellent religion was, for so many ages, involved ; but let this consideration be a motive with you to walk as becomes so glorious a light. If your conduct be such as, instead of recommending your

own generous principles, furnishes an excuse to others, for acquiescing in their prejudices and errors, all the dishonour which is thereby thrown upon God, and the injury which will be done to the pure religion of Jesus Christ, by keeping it longer in a corrupted state at home, and preventing its propagation abroad, will be your peculiar guilt, and greatly aggravate your condemnation.

Value the Scriptures, as a treasury of Divine knowledge, consisting of books which are eminently calculated to inspire you with just sentiments, and prompt you to right conduct; and consider them also as the only proper authority in matters of faith.

In a thing so interesting to you as the business of religion, affecting the regulation of your conduct here, so as to prepare you for immortal happiness hereafter, respect no human authority whatever. Submit to those who are invested with the supreme power in your country, as your lawful civil magistrates; but if they would prescribe to you in matters of faith, say, that you have but one Father, even God, and one Master, even Christ, and stand fast in the liberty with which he has made you free. Respect a parliamentary king, and cheerfully pay all parliamentary taxes; but have nothing to do with a parliamentary religion, or a parliamentary God.\*

Religious rights, and religious liberty, are things of inestimable value. For these have many of our ancestors suffered and died; and shall we, in the sunshine of prosperity, desert that glorious cause, from which no storms of adversity or persecution could make them swerve? Let us consider it as a duty of the first rank with respect to moral obligation, to transmit to our posterity, and provide as far as we can, for transmitting, unimpaired, to the latest generations, that generous zeal for religion and liberty, which makes the memory of our forefathers so truly illustrious.†

\* This was the language held, as I have been informed, by Lord Wharton, in the debate about the Act of William and Mary, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. P. This debate was in 1724, on a Bill "for the more effectual suppression of Blasphemy and Profaneness." It was the Earl of Peterborough who said "that though he was for a parliamentary king, yet he did not desire to have a parliamentary God, or a Parliamentary religion." Oldmixon's Hist. fol. II. pp. 718, 719.

† In his Remarks on *Blackstone*, 1769, the Author had more correctly described the *Presbyterians*, charging them with the design, after the death of Charles, to "have made a most intolerant establishment." A very just description. See Chandler's "History of Persecution," 1736, p. 382, and a Note by Dr. Kippis, Biog. Brit. p. 605.

So long as it shall please that God, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, to continue me in that relation, in which I think myself happy in standing to you at present, I trust that I shall not fail to endeavour to impress your minds with a just sense of what you owe to God, to your country, and to mankind. Let it be our mutual care to derive the most durable advantage from our present temporary connexion, by growing continually more established, strengthened and settled, in the habit and practice of all the virtues which become us as men and as Christians; that we may secure a happy meeting, and mutual congratulation in the future kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

I am,  
My young friends,  
With affection and esteem,  
Your brother and servant,  
In the gospel of Jesus Christ,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

*Leeds, March, 1772.*

\* \* \* I hope that the younger part of my congregation at Birmingham will consider what I originally addressed to my pupils at Leeds as addressed to themselves; and I flatter myself that the extension of my plan of lecturing in my present situation, will be attended with proportionable pleasure to myself, and advantage to them.

*Birmingham, Jan. 1, 1782.*

---

## P R E F A C E.



NO branch of knowledge can be taught to advantage except in a regular, or systematical method. It is also very convenient, both for the teacher and the learner, to have the elements of any science drawn up in a succinct manner ; by the help of which the one may be directed in what order to explain the several branches of it, and the other may see at one view all its constituent parts, in their natural connexion, and thereby gain the most comprehensive and distinct idea of the whole, which is also a great advantage for retaining it in memory.

It was with a view to the instruction of youth that the following *Institutes* were composed, and nothing more was meant, originally, than to furnish myself with an easy method of discoursing upon the subjects of natural and revealed religion to the young men of my own congregation, whom I formed into a class for that purpose. But when I was induced to publish them, for the benefit of others, I made them a little fuller, that those young persons who can have little or no assistance in their inquiries, might be able to read them with tolerable advantage. I shall think myself happy if this manual be the means of establishing any of the youth of the present age in the sound knowledge of those most important subjects to which it is appropriated. I am satisfied that no man can write, or live, to better purpose.

As my sole view in this short system was to teach the elements of religious knowledge to persons intended for common and civil life, and not for any of the learned professions, I have avoided, as much as I possibly could, those metaphysical and abstruse speculations, which have been

raised from every branch of my subject, and have chiefly confined myself to such considerations as are most adapted to produce conviction in the minds of those who are not much used to close reflection; and I have endeavoured through the whole, to express myself with the greatest clearness and precision. For this purpose, I have been obliged to depart considerably from the plan of any treatise that I have yet seen upon these subjects.

I am far, however, from being able to promise that I shall leave these subjects free from all obscurity. The mind of man will never be able to contemplate the being, perfections and providence of God, without meeting with inexplicable difficulties. We may find sufficient reason for acquiescing in the darkness which involves these great subjects, but we must never expect to see them set in a perfectly clear light. But notwithstanding this, we may know enough of the Divine Being, and of his moral government, to make us much better and happier beings than we could be without such knowledge; and even the consideration of the insuperable difficulties referred to above is not without its use, as it tends to impress the mind with sentiments of reverence, humility and submission.

I have also had another view in not choosing to conceal some of the great difficulties which attend the demonstration, if not of the *being*, yet of the most essential attributes, and moral government of God. It was, that the consideration of them might make us more sensible of the value of revelation, by which many of them are, in a great measure, cleared up, and by which great light has been thrown upon every important branch of natural religion.

Many unbelievers avail themselves very much of the diversity of opinions which prevails among the professors of revealed religion, and boast of the great clearness, as well as sufficiency of the light of nature. But the case is much otherwise; and there have been, in fact, among men of the greatest learning and acuteness of thought, believers and unbelievers in revelation, as great a diversity of opinion with respect to the principles of natural, as of revealed religion. And notwithstanding the various sentiments of Christians, they are all perfectly agreed, and unanimous, with respect to all the most important doctrines of natural religion, concerning which unbelievers in revelation have never been able to arrive at any certainty, or uniformity of opinion; so that men who think at all are very far from

getting rid of any real difficulty by abandoning revelation. Nay, the difficulties which we shall find upon this subject among Christians, though I shall not fail to state them with the greatest fairness, suppressing nothing that can contribute to their strength, are by no means so embarrassing to the mind of man, as those which occur in the contemplation of nature.

If any person, discouraged by these difficulties, should think to relieve himself by rejecting all religion, natural and revealed, he will find, if he reflect at all, that he has miserably deceived himself, and that he is involved in greater perplexity than ever; the scheme he has adopted not only filling his mind with great darkness and distress, but being contrary to some of the plainest appearances in nature, and therefore manifestly irrational and absurd. In this case, therefore, true philosophy will lead a man to acquiesce in that scheme of principles which is attended with the fewest difficulties, without expecting to meet with any that is quite free from them; and a good man will be drawn by a strong propensity to embrace that system, the contemplation and influence of which will tend to make him, and his brethren of mankind, most virtuous and happy. This important circumstance will always operate as an evidence for the truth of natural and revealed religion, on minds which are not perverted by sophistry or vice.

In the latter part of these Institutes, which relates to the duty and final expectations of mankind, it will be seen that I have made great use of Dr. Hartley's "Observations on Man." To this writer I think myself happy in having any fair opportunity of making my acknowledgments; and I shall think that a very valuable end will be gained, if, by this or any other means, a greater degree of attention could be drawn upon that most excellent performance, so as to make it more generally read, and studied, by those who are qualified to do it. I do not know any thing that is better adapted to make an impression upon truly philosophical minds than the sketch that he has given of the evidences of Christianity, in his second volume; and for this reason I should be exceedingly glad to see that part of his work published separately.\*

\* This has since been done by the Unitarian Society.

# AN ESSAY

## ON THE

### BEST METHOD OF COMMUNICATING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

TO THE  
MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES.\*



THE superficial knowledge, or rather the extreme ignorance of the generality of youth in the present age, with respect to religion, is the subject of great and just complaint; and for want of being well established in the principles of rational religion, many of them are daily falling a prey to enthusiasm on one hand, and infidelity on the other. In this life we must not expect any good without some attendant evil. The circumstance of which we now complain has been, in part, the natural effect of the moderation of the present times, in which no person is even questioned about his religion. For, as the subject is never canvassed, nor so much as started in polite company, no person thinks it worth his while to prepare himself for making any reply; and, consequently, the youth of this age never professedly study the subject, or ever give more than an occasional and cursory attention to it.

Another source of this complaint is, the little care that is now taken by parents in the religious instruction of their children. They condemn the severity with which they recollect that they themselves were treated; and, not considering the advantage which they derive from it, exclaim against such excessive rigour and austerity, and throw off not only the tutor, but almost the master too, with respect to their children; not recollecting that, after this, there is little left of the parent that is truly valuable. To this conduct they are, no doubt, at the same time, secretly influenced

\* First published separately in 1771. See Theol. Repos. III. p. 384. Adv.

by a regard to their own ease ; for upon the present fashionable plan, a person gives himself very little trouble indeed about forming the minds of his offspring ; and some may think that they have sufficiently done their duty in this respect, when they have provided them with masters to superintend their education in general.

Many persons will not readily adopt my sentiments relating to this subject. For my own part, however, I have not the least doubt but that, though the maxims of our forefathers may have been too strict, we of the present age are already far gone in another extreme, opposite to theirs and much more dangerous. Their method, by restraining the inclinations of youth, might, (though perhaps, upon the whole, it might not) diminish the happiness of that early period of life ; and, in some instances, I doubt not, the excessive restraints they were under might serve to inflame their passions, and prepare them for the more unbounded and criminal indulgence of them, when they became their own masters ; but, in general, habits of sobriety and moderation were, by this means, effectually formed, and a disposition to licentiousness entirely precluded.

On the contrary, our greater indulgence to youth gives them more liberty, but, perhaps, not more real enjoyment even of early life ; but, whatever good effect this conduct may have upon some ingenuous tempers, I am satisfied that, in general, it is fatal to virtue and happiness through life. Our youth having had little or no restraint put upon their inclinations, and religious principles not having been sufficiently inculcated, they give the reins to pleasure, at that critical time of life, in which the passions are peculiarly strong, and reason weak ; and the authority of a parent not interposing, where it is most wanted, a disposition to licentiousness is completely formed, and such bad habits are contracted, as too often end in utter profligacy and ruin. At best, their minds not having been seasoned with the principles of religion, they become mere men of the world, without vice, perhaps, but also without virtue.

Also, in consequence of the same superficial education, to say the least of it, our youth having never thought upon the subject of religion, instead of entertaining those enlarged sentiments of religious liberty, which will never be wholly extinct in the breasts of their parents, the slightest inducement is often sufficient to make them abandon the Dissenting interest, the value of which they were never taught to understand ; and to make them conform to the established

religion of this, and for the same reason to that of any other country in the world, attended with sufficient temporal encouragement.

With the disuse of family prayer, the regular reading of the Scriptures has also been laid aside; so that in most of our opulent families, the youth have hardly an opportunity of making themselves acquainted with the contents of those books which are the source of all religious knowledge. When the Bible, if there be one in the family, is wholly neglected by the parent, what inducement can the son have to look into it?

A false taste, and a pretended reverence for the Scriptures, has, likewise, banished them from many of our schools; so that, except their being read in detached and unconnected portions, in places of public worship,\* many persons, it is to be feared, would live and die in utter ignorance of the contents of their Bibles.

With this neglect of family discipline, the neglect of discipline in our churches, which has been owing to similar causes, has likewise concurred.† In many of our societies the business of catechising has, likewise, been laid aside, nor has any thing been substituted in its place, as better adapted to communicate religious knowledge; so that, as the minister is seldom seen but in the pulpit, (I mean in a ministerial character,) all the opportunity that the people have of being instructed in the theory of religion, is their hearing miscellaneous discourses, which are now almost every where confined to subjects which have an immediate relation to practice, while the theory of religion, and the evidences of it, are almost wholly neglected.

Because common sense is a sufficient guard against many errors in religion, it seems to have been taken for granted, that common sense is a sufficient instructor also; whereas, in fact, without positive instruction, men would naturally have been mere savages with respect to religion; as, without similar instruction, they would be savages with respect to the arts of life and the sciences. Common sense can only be compared to a judge; but what can a judge do without evidence, and proper materials from which to form a judgment?

Such is the evil, of which not myself only, but every person who seriously considers the present state of things

\* The Author improved on this practice by his own connected Expositions, which at length furnished his "Notes on the Bible."

† See the Author's Address "On the subject of Church Discipline."

among the Dissenters, and its manifest tendency in futurity, complain. Let us now consider what is the most proper and effectual remedy for this evil, and how far the application of it may be easy and practicable.

As the source of the evil, as far as it arises from ourselves, was observed to be twofold, namely, the neglect of parental and ministerial instruction, it is easy to infer, that the most complete and effectual remedy must be twofold also, consisting in the revival of that discipline, both in churches and private families, by which we ourselves received that instruction, the advantages of which we are apt to overlook, till we see the dreadful effects of the want of it in others. If the discipline of our forefathers, in either of these respects, has been too severe for the gentleness of modern manners, let that severity be relaxed, but let nothing that is really useful be laid aside.

It is certainly desirable, that more attention be given both to the morals, and the religious instruction of youth, by those who undertake the conduct of our societies, as well as by their parents. But if it be impossible, as I am apprehensive it generally will be, to revive the ancient forms of our church discipline, (in consequence of which a number of the most intelligent, serious, and prudent members of our churches might be appointed to superintend the instruction of youth,) let the minister exert himself the more in this field, which alone can promise a reward for his labours. When a person's mode of thinking, and his habits of life are fixed, as they generally are before he arrives at thirty or forty years of age, and especially when they have been confirmed by having met with no opposition or controul, from that time to a more advanced period of life, there can be but little prospect of making any good and lasting impressions. In this case, a change of thinking, or acting, will be brought about, if at all, with very great difficulty, and old notions and habits will be apt to return upon the slightest occasions, and get firmer hold of the mind than ever.

If men have lived all their lives unacquainted with better principles, the proposal of them may strike and influence; but if they relate to subjects which they have often heard canvassed, and on which little can be said that is absolutely new to them, it may be taken for granted, that the recital of arguments which they presume have been fully confuted, will only confirm them in their former prejudices. It is best, therefore, to bear with the aged, and, in many cases, with those who are advanced to middle life, and not without some

very urgent reason, arising from very particular circumstances, attempt the arduous and almost hopeless task of rectifying their errors; though something more should be done towards reforming their conduct. But, in youth, the mind is flexible, opinions are unfixed and habits not confirmed. At this time of life, therefore; arguments and expostulations may have real weight; good principles and maxims may be recommended with effect; and a little reasonable assistance may be sufficient to mould them to our wish.

The great object of a minister's chief attention being thus fixed, viz. upon the younger and more teachable part of his congregation, it remains to be considered in what manner their instruction may be best provided for. Now, it appears to me, that the only effectual provision for this purpose, is a course of regular and systematical instruction. Every branch of knowledge is built on certain facts and principles; and, in order that these be fully and clearly understood, they must be delivered in a proper order, so that one thing may most naturally introduce another. In other words, no branch of knowledge, religion not excepted, can be taught to advantage but in the way of system. Frightful as this word may sound, it signifies nothing but an orderly and regular set of principles, beginning with the easiest, and ending with the most difficult, which, in this manner, are the most easily demonstrated. No person would ever think of teaching law or medicine, or any other branch of science, in the manner in which religion is now generally taught; and as no person ever acquired a competent knowledge of law, medicine, or any other science, by hearing miscellaneous discourses upon the subject, so neither can we reasonably expect that a just and comprehensive knowledge of religion should ever be communicated in the same loose and incoherent manner. Besides, it is now too much the fashion to neglect public worship; and any scheme of business or pleasure is thought to be a sufficient excuse for a person's absenting himself from it, even on the Lord's day; so that this only means of instruction, insufficient as it is for the purpose, is becoming every day more uncertain; and it may be expected that less advantage will be made of it continually.

On these accounts, religious knowledge will never be communicated with certainty and good effect, from the pulpit only. Those of the congregation who think themselves already sufficiently knowing, will be disgusted with the

repetition of elementary principles ; to those who are extremely ignorant, it is not possible, in a formal discourse, to speak plainly and familiarly enough ; and those whose minds are not sufficiently enlightened, and especially those whose prejudices are of long standing, will be apt to take offence at the discovery of truths which it will be impossible for them to comprehend or receive.

There can be no hope, therefore, of doing any thing to good purpose, in this way, unless the minister can have an opportunity of discoursing to the young persons by themselves. He may then converse with them familiarly on the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion ; he may say the same things over and over again, and change his form of expression, in order to make himself perfectly understood ; he may also illustrate what he advances, by familiar instances and examples, and set every thing of importance in a great variety of lights. Moreover, if they will submit to it (which it will be greatly to their advantage to do), he may examine them on the subjects on which he has discoursed, so as to satisfy himself whether they have perfectly understood him, whether they retain in memory the facts and reasonings which he has advanced, and be sufficiently grounded in one thing before he proceeds to another. This method will also give him an opportunity of removing any difficulties, or answering any objections, which may have occurred to them, or which may have been thrown in their way by other persons.\* In short, I would advise a minister to form the young men of his congregation, from the age of eighteen or twenty to about thirty, into an academical class,

\* *Charron, in his Work on Wisdom, thus explains and recommends this method of a tutor: "Premièrement il doit souvent interroger son ecolier, le faire parler & dire son avis sur tout ce qui se presente. Ceci est au rebours du style ordinaire, qui est que le maître parle toujours seul, & enseigne cet enfant avec autorité, & verse dans sa tête, comme dans un vaisseau, tout ce qu'il veut: tellement que les enfans ne sont que simplement ecoutans, & recevans, qui est une tres mauvaise façon; obest plerumque iis, qui discere volunt, autoritas eorum qui docent. Il faut reveiller & echauffer leur esprit par demandes, les faire opiner les premiers, & leur donner même la liberté de demander, s'enquerir & ouvrir le chemin, quand ils voudront. Si sans les faire parler, on leur parle tout seul, c'est chose presque perdue, l'enfant n'en fait en rien profit, pour ce qu'il pense n'en etre pas d'ecot: il n'y prete que l'oreille, encore bien froidement: il ne s'en pique pas, comme quand il est de la partie. Et ce n'est pas assez leur faire dire leur avis, car il leur faut toujours faire soutenir & rendre raison de leur dire, afin qu'ils ne parlent pas par acquies, mais qu'ils soient soigneux & attentifs à ce qu'ils diront: & pour leur donner courage il faut faire conte de ce qu'ils diront, au moins de leur essai. Cette façon d'instruire par demandes est excellemment observée par Socrates (le premier en cette besogne) comme nous voyons par tout en Platon, où par une longue enfilade de demandes dextrement faites, il mene doucement au gîte de la verité: & par le Docteur de verité en son Evangile." De la Sagesse, L. iii. Ch. 14. Sect. 28, Ed. Elzev. Charron died at Paris in 1603.*

and take the very same methods to teach them the elements of religion, that he would do to teach them the rudiments of any branch of natural knowledge.

To make this business easier to the tutor, and the more advantageous to his pupils, it will be rather advisable, that he give his lectures from a short text or system, written, or rather printed, that they may have an opportunity of perusing it, and of studying it when they are by themselves, and thereby the better prepare themselves for examination.

I do not give this advice at random, or from theory only, for I have carried the scheme which I am now recommending into execution; and I can assure my friends in the ministry that, as far as my own experience is a guide, they may promise themselves much pleasure, and their pupils much advantage from the exercise.

If it can be made agreeable to the people, I would also advise, that the minister deliver the heads of his system in a set of regular discourses to the congregation at large, once in four or five years, that those persons whom it may not be advisable to admit to his familiar lectures, may have an opportunity of hearing some useful topics discussed at least in a concise manner, which they might, otherwise, have never heard of at all. But if the congregation should not be sufficiently uniform in their sentiments, it will hardly be prudent, for reasons sufficiently hinted above, to adopt this measure. It will also depend upon particular circumstances, whether the young women should be admitted to the familiar lectures along with the young men, or not.

That my readers may perfectly understand my scheme, and derive what advantage they please from it, I now publish the principal heads of my own lectures, in these *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*. Ministers whose sentiments are pretty nearly my own may, perhaps, save themselves trouble by making use of them, departing from my particular sentiments or method, whenever they think proper. The whole work is divided into three parts, the first comprising the principles of natural religion; the second the evidences of revelation; and the third the doctrines of revelation. I have also nearly completed another work, which may also be of use in the instruction of young persons. It will be entitled, *An Historical Account of the Corruptions of Christianity*. \* This will contain the reasons for our Protestant faith, and also those of our dissent

\* Designed to have formed a fourth volume of the *Institutes* when they were first published in 1772, in 3 vols. 12mo. but deferred till 1792.

from the Established Church of England, with which every Dissenter ought to be made thoroughly acquainted.

Besides this principal class, I would advise a minister, who is desirous to communicate religious knowledge with effect, and who would adapt his instructions to the different ages of his hearers, to form two other classes, one consisting of children under fourteen years of age. To these he should teach a short catechism, containing the first elements of religious knowledge, delivered in the plainest and most familiar language possible; and when it is made use of, a variety of other questions should be asked, calculated to bring the subject to the level of their capacities. A catechism of this kind I published some years ago; and I am satisfied from my own experience, that a child, even of four or five years of age, may be made to understand the most important truths of Christianity, and that it is of great consequence that the minds of children be impressed with this kind of knowledge as early as possible. No person who has actually made a trial of this method of instructing children, and who can do it with any degree of judgment, will say that it is a painful task to children. On the contrary, I have generally found them to be pleased, and in many cases exceedingly delighted with it.

In the other junior class, I would teach the knowledge of the Scriptures only. This appears to me to be a subject so distinct, copious and important, that a separate class should be appropriated to it; and I think that the best manner in which this great end can be gained, is to have a set of questions only, printed, with references to those places in the Bible, which must be read, in order to find the proper answers. Such a scripture catechism as this I have also published. This class may properly consist of young persons of both sexes, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, so as to be an intermediate class, between the two others. It may be advisable, however, and may even be necessary at the first, to add to this class such members of the higher class as are not sufficiently acquainted with the Scriptures; and, in the present state of our societies, I am afraid that many such will be found above eighteen years of age; but of these it may be hoped, that there will be many who will not think themselves too old to learn, and who may even take pleasure in such an exercise as this, which is equally calculated to improve the most knowing, as well as to instruct the most ignorant. Digitized by Google

These three classes appear to me to be sufficient for the

purpose of communicating religious instruction ; at least I cannot, at present, think of any thing better adapted to the purpose. I sincerely wish that other ministers, who cannot but be sensible of the evil that I complain of, would propose what appears to them to be a proper remedy for it, and let us freely adopt whatever we approve in each other's schemes.

To make room for lectures of such manifest utility as these, which I have now recommended, it were to be wished that weekly, and other periodical preaching lectures, especially that which is in many places preparatory to the Lord's Supper, were laid aside.\* The last-mentioned service, whatever good it may do in other respects, does, unquestionably, promote superstition ; continually suggesting and confirming the opinion, that the attendance upon this Christian ordinance requires more particular preparation than any other, which is an idea that could never occur to any person in perusing the New Testament only, and can be nothing but the remains of the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation.

Other weekly or monthly sermons are seldom attended, except by a few persons, and those chiefly the aged, and such others as have the least occasion for them ; and they are often a burden to the minister, who is sensible that he is giving his labour, which might be better bestowed, to very little purpose. It has seemed fit to Infinite Wisdom, that one day in seven is proper and sufficient for rest from labour, and the purposes of public worship. When we are got beyond this scripture directory, all the rest is such will-worship, as no bounds can be set to. It has certainly been the foundation of much superstition, and has, in many cases, occasioned a fatal and very criminal neglect of the proper business of this life. In what I have now said, I would by no means be understood to condemn all occasional acts of public worship, as on days set apart for public fasting and thanksgiving, or on particular annual solemnities, some of which answer very good purposes.

As all Christians are brethren, and we are expressly commanded to exhort one another, I hope it will not be deemed arrogant in me to have given my advice with respect to a matter of so much importance, as the best method of communicating religious knowledge, in which all Christian ministers are equally concerned. The schemes which

\* These Preparation Sermons have been long confined to *Independents* and *Particular Baptists*.

I have proposed are such as I can recommend from the trial that I have made of them, and they appear to me to be very practicable by any person who is sufficiently qualified to discharge any other part of the ministerial duty; and in the country, I believe that such services will generally be acceptable, as well as useful. As to the city, I am not so well able to judge; but if I be not misinformed, the connexion between minister and people is, in general so slight, that schemes which suppose much personal respect for the pastor on one side, and an affectionate concern for the people on the other, can hardly be expected to succeed. The prevailing practice of a London minister preaching to one congregation in the morning, and to another in the afternoon, when each of them is able to provide for one (as in fact they half provide for two); tends still farther to sink the minister into a mere lecturer, and to exclude the idea of every thing besides a stipulated sum of money on the one side, and mere stipulated duty on the other. In such congregations one would think that the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus were never read; and certainly the business of ordination in such places must be a mere form, or farce, without any meaning whatever.

Hoping that my presumption in offering the preceding advice has not given offence, I shall take the farther liberty to conclude with a word of exhortation, in which I shall think myself equally concerned.

Since, my brethren in the Christian ministry, in the present state of church discipline, so unequal a share of the burden is fallen upon us, let us not, through despair of doing every thing that ought to be done, think ourselves excusable in attempting nothing. If we cannot possibly warn all the unruly, comfort all the feeble-minded, instruct all the ignorant, confirm all the doubting, and seek and save all that are in danger of being lost, let us do all that we can in each of these branches of ministerial duty. Since, with respect to the business of admonition, we are so circumstanced, that we can but seldom attempt any thing with a prospect of success, let us do the more by way of instruction, which is a field that is still open to us. If we cannot reclaim from vice, let us endeavour to instil those principles, which may prevent the commission of it, and to communicate that rational and useful knowledge, which is the only solid foundation of virtuous practice and good conduct in life.

If every man be a steward, according to the ability and

opportunity which God has given him of being useful to his fellow-creatures, much more ought we to consider ourselves in that light; and it is required of every steward that he be faithful to his trust. The master under whom we act, and to whom we are immediately accountable is the great shepherd and bishop of souls, Christ Jesus. Our instructions are, to feed his lambs and his sheep. Let us see to it, then, that none of those who are committed to our care perish for lack of knowledge. If they will die in their iniquity, let us so act under the melancholy prospect, that their blood may not be required at our hands; that we may, at least, save our own souls, if not those that hear us. When our Lord shall return, and take account of his servants, let it appear that we have diligently improved the talents with which we were intrusted, that of two we have made other two, and of five other five, &c., and then, and then only, shall we "not be ashamed before him at his coming."

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Since the publication of the first edition of this work, I am able to recommend the plan here laid down by farther experience, having considerably extended the courses of my lectures to young persons in my present situation at Birmingham; having made a separate class of the young women, and the society having been so liberal as to provide a very valuable library, which will be continually increasing, chiefly for the use of those who attend the classes; consisting of books recommended by the ministers for that purpose. Also, besides the lectures recommended in this introductory essay, I find it useful to teach Scripture geography to the younger classes, and with the elder I shall probably go through a short course of Jewish antiquities, ecclesiastical history, and such other miscellaneous branches of knowledge, as may be more particularly useful, to enable them to read the Scriptures with advantage.

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# INSTITUTES OF RELIGION.

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## PART I.

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### OF THE BEING AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

IN these Institutes I shall endeavour to explain *the principles of natural and revealed religion*; or to assign the reasons why we acknowledge ourselves to be subject to the moral government of God, and why we profess ourselves to be Christians, and consistent Protestants.

Knowledge of this kind is, in its own nature, the most important of any that we can give our attention to; because it is the most nearly connected with our present and future happiness.

If there be a God, and if we be accountable to him for our conduct, it must be highly interesting to us to know all that we can, concerning his character and government, concerning what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him. If it be true that a person, pretending to be sent from God, hath assured us of a future life, it certainly behoves us to examine his pretensions to divine authority; and if we see reason to admit them, to inform ourselves concerning the whole of his instructions, and particularly what kind of behaviour here will secure our happiness hereafter. Lastly, if the religion we profess be divine, and have been corrupted by the ignorance or artifice of men, it is a matter of consequence that it be restored to its primitive purity; because its efficacy upon the heart and life must depend upon it. And if men have usurped any power with respect to religion, which the Author of it has not given them, it is of consequence that their unjust claims be exposed and resisted.

In order to give the most distinct view of the principles of religion, I shall first explain what it is that we learn from

*nature*, and then what farther lights we receive from *revelation*. But it must be observed, that, in giving a delineation of natural religion, I shall deliver what I suppose *might* have been known concerning God, our duty, and our future expectations by the light of nature, and not what *was actually* known of them by any of the human race; for these are very different things. Many things are, in their own nature, attainable, which, in fact, are never attained; so that though we find but little of the knowledge of God, and of his providence, in many nations, which never enjoyed the light of revelation, it does not follow that nature did not contain and teach those lessons, and that men had not the means of learning them, provided they had made the most of the light they had, and of the powers that were given them.

I shall, therefore, include under the head of *natural religion*, all that can be demonstrated, or proved to be true by natural reason, though it was never, in fact, discovered by it; and even though it be probable that mankind would never have known it without the assistance of revelation. Thus the doctrine of a future state may be called a doctrine of natural religion, if, when we have had the first knowledge of it from divine revelation, we can afterwards shew that the expectation of it was probable from the light of nature, and that present appearances are, upon the whole, favourable to the supposition of it,

## SECTION I.

*Of the Existence of God, and those Attributes which are deduced from his being considered as uncaused Himself, and the Cause of every Thing else.*

WHEN we say there is a GOD, we mean that there is an intelligent, designing cause of what we see in the world around us, and a Being who was himself uncaused. Unless we have recourse to this supposition, we cannot account for present appearances; for there is an evident incapacity in every thing we see of being the cause of its own existence, or of the existence of other things. Though, in one sense, some things are the causes of others, yet they are only so in part; and when we give sufficient attention to their nature, we shall see, that it is very improperly that they are termed *causes* at all: for when we have allowed all that we can to their influence and operation, there is still something that must be referred to a prior and superior cause. Thus we say that a proper soil, together with

the influences of the sun and the rain, are the causes of the growth of plants ; but, in fact, all that we mean, and all that, in strictness, we ought to say, is, that according to the present constitution of things, plants could not grow but in those circumstances ; for, if there had not been a body previously organized like a plant, and if there had not existed what we call *a constitution of nature*, in consequence of which plants are disposed to thrive by the influence of the soil, the sun and the rain, those circumstances would have signified nothing ; and the fitness of the organs of a plant to receive nourishment from the soil, the rain and the sun, is a proof of such wisdom and design, as those bodies are evidently destitute of. If the fitting of a suit of clothes to the body of a man be an argument of *contrivance*, and consequently prove the existence of an intelligent agent, much more is the fitness of a thousand things to a thousand other things in the system of nature, a proof of an intelligent, designing cause ; and this intelligent cause we call GOD.

If, for argument's sake, we should admit that the immediate Author of this world was not himself the first cause, but that he derived his being and powers from some other being, superior to him ; still, in tracing the cause of this being, and the cause of his cause, &c., we shall at length be constrained to acknowledge a *first cause*, one who is himself uncaused, and who derives his being and cause from no superior whatever.

It must be acknowledged, however, that our faculties are unequal to the comprehension of this subject. Being used to pass from effects to causes, and being used to look for a cause adequate to the thing caused, and consequently to expect a greater cause for a greater effect, it is natural to suppose, that, if the things we see, which we say are the production of divine power, required a cause, the Divine Being himself must have required a greater cause. But this train of reasoning would lead us into a manifest absurdity, in inquiring for a higher and a higher cause *ad infinitum*. It may, perhaps, be true, though we cannot distinctly see it to be so, that as all *finite* things require a cause, *infinities* admit of none. It is evident, that nothing can *begin* to be without a cause ; but it by no means follows from thence, that that must have had a cause which had *no beginning*. But whatever there may be in this conjecture, we are constrained, in pursuing the train of causes and effects, to stop at last at something uncaused.

That any being should be *self-created* is evidently absurd,

because that would suppose that he had a being before he had, or that he existed, and did not exist at the same time. For want of clearer knowledge of this subject, we are obliged to content ourselves with terms that convey only *negative* ideas, and to say that God is a being *uncreated* or *uncaused*; and this is all that we mean when we sometimes say that he is *self-existent*.

It has been said by some, that if we suppose an *infinite succession* of finite beings, there will be no necessity to admit any thing to have been uncaused. The race of men, for instance, may have been from eternity, no individual of the species being much superior to the rest. But this supposition only involves the question in more obscurity, and does not approach, in the least, to the solution of any difficulty. For if we carry this imaginary succession ever so far back in our ideas, we are in just the same situation as when we set out; for we are still considering a species of beings who cannot so much as comprehend even their own make and constitution; and we are, therefore, still in want of some being who was capable of thoroughly knowing, and of forming them; and also of adapting the various parts of their bodies, and the faculties of their minds, to the sphere of life in which they act. In fact, an *infinite succession* of finite beings as much requires a cause, as a *single* finite being; and we have as little satisfaction in considering one of them as uncaused, as we have in considering the other.

It was said, by the Epicureans of old, that all things were formed by the *fortuitous concurrence of atoms*; that, originally, there were particles of all kinds floating at random in infinite space; and that, since certain combinations of particles constitute all bodies, and since, in infinite time, these particles must have been combined in all possible ways, the present system at length arose, without any designing cause.\* But still, it may be asked, how could these atoms move without a *mover*; and what could have arisen from their combinations, but mere heaps of matter, of different forms and sizes? They could, of themselves, have had no power of acting upon one another, as bodies now have, by such properties as magnetism, electricity, gravitation, &c., unless these powers had been communicated to them by some superior being.

It is no wonder that we feel, and must acknowledge the imperfection of our faculties, when we are employed upon

\* See *Lucretius*, Book v. line 450, &c., and the examination of his system in *Lackmore's Creation*, Book iv.

such a subject as this. We are involved in inextricable difficulties in considering the origin, as we may say, of the *works* of God. It is impossible that we should conceive how creation should have been coeval with its Maker; and yet, if we admit that there ever was a time when nothing existed, besides the Divine Being himself, we must suppose a whole eternity to have preceded any act of creation; an eternity in which the Divine Being was possessed of the power and disposition to create, and to make happy, without once exerting them; or that a reason for creating must have occurred to him after the lapse of a whole eternity, which had not occurred before; and these seem to be greater difficulties than the other. Upon the whole, it seems to be the most agreeable to reason, though it be altogether incomprehensible by our reason, that there never was a time when this great uncaused Being did not exert his perfections, in giving life and happiness to his offspring. We shall, also, find no greater difficulty in admitting, that the creation, as it had *no beginning*, so neither has it any *bounds*; but that infinite space is replenished with worlds, in which the power, wisdom and goodness of God, always have been, and always will be displayed.

There seems to be no difficulty in these amazing suppositions, except what arises from the imperfection of our faculties; and if we reject these, we must of necessity adopt other suppositions, still more improbable, and involve ourselves in much greater difficulties. It is, indeed, impossible for us to conceive, in an adequate manner, concerning any thing that is infinite, or even to express ourselves concerning it without falling into seeming absurdities. If we say that it is impossible that the works of God should have been from eternity, we may say the same concerning any particular thought in the Divine mind, or even concerning any particular moment of time in the eternity that has preceded us; for these are all of the nature of particular *events*, which must have taken place at some definite time, or at some precise, given distance from the present moment. But as we are sure that the Divine Being himself, and *duration* itself, must have been without beginning, notwithstanding this argument—the works of God may also have been without beginning, notwithstanding the same argument. It may make this difficulty the easier to us, to consider that *thinking* and *acting*, or *creating*, may be the same thing with God.

So little are our minds equal to these speculations, that though we all agree that an infinite duration must have pre-

ceded the present moment, and that another infinite duration must necessarily follow it; and though the former of these is continually receiving additions, which is, in our idea, the same thing as its growing continually larger; and the latter is constantly suffering as great diminutions, which in our idea, is the same thing as its growing continually less; yet we are forced to acknowledge that they both ever have been, and always must be exactly equal; neither of them being at any time conceivably greater, or less than the other. Nay, we cannot conceive how both these eternities, added together, can be greater than either of them separately taken.

Having demonstrated the existence of God, as the first cause, the creator, and disposer of all things; we are naturally led to inquire, in the next place, what properties or attributes he is possessed of. Now these naturally divide themselves into *two classes*; being either such as flow from his being considered as the original cause of all things, or such as the particular nature of the works of which he is the author lead us to ascribe to him.

## SECTION II.

*Of those Attributes of the Deity which are deduced from the Consideration of his being the original Cause of all Things.*

WITHOUT any particular regard to the works of God, we cannot but conclude that the original cause of all things must have been *eternal*; for, since nothing can begin to exist without a cause, if there ever had been a time when nothing existed, nothing could have existed at present.

Secondly, this original cause must likewise be *immutable*, or not subject to change. We seem to require no other proof of this, than the impossibility of conceiving whence a change could arise in a being uncaused. If there was no cause of his existence itself, it seems to follow, that there could be no cause of a change in the manner of his existence; so that whatever he was originally, he must for ever continue to be. Besides, a capacity of producing a change in any being or thing, implies something prior and superior, something that can controul, and that is incapable of being resisted; which can only be true of the supreme cause itself.

The immutability of the Divine Being, or his being incapable of being acted upon, or controulled by any other, is what we mean when we say that he is an *independent* Being, if by this term we mean any thing more than his being uncaused.

## SECTION III.

*Of those Attributes of the Divine Being which the Consideration of his Works leads us to ascribe to him.*

THAT God is *eternal* and *immutable*, follows necessarily, as we have seen, from his being *uncaused*; but if we consider the *effects* of which he is the cause, or, in other words, the *works* of which he is the author, we shall be led to ascribe to him other attributes, particularly those of *power*, *wisdom* and *goodness*, and consequently all the attributes which are necessarily connected with, or flow from them.

If we call a being *powerful*, when he is able to produce great effects, or to accomplish great works, we cannot avoid ascribing this attribute to God, as the author of every thing that we behold; and when we consider the apparent greatness, variety and extent of the works of God, in the whole frame of nature; as in the sun, moon and stars, in the earth which we inhabit, and in the vegetables and animals which it contains, together with the powers of reason and understanding possessed by man, we cannot suppose any effect to which the divine power is not equal; and therefore we are authorized to say that it is *infinite*, or capable of producing any thing, that is not in its own nature impossible; so that whatever purposes the Divine Being forms, he is always able to execute.

The *designs* of such a Being as this, who cannot be controuled in the execution of any of his purposes, would be very obvious to us if we could comprehend his works, or see the issue of them; but this we cannot do with respect to the works of God, which are both incomprehensible by our finite understandings, and also are not yet completed; for as far as they are subject to our inspection, they are evidently in a progress to something more perfect. Yet from the *subordinate parts* of this great machine of the universe, which we can in some measure understand, and which are completed; and also from the manifest *tendency* of things, we may safely conclude, that the great design of the Divine Being, in all the works of his hands, was to produce happiness.

That the world is in a state of improvement, is very evident in the human species, which is the most distinguished part of it. Knowledge, and a variety of improvements depending upon knowledge (all of which are directly

or indirectly subservient to happiness), have been increasing from the time of our earliest acquaintance with history to the present; and in the last century this progress has been amazingly rapid. By means of increasing commerce, the valuable productions of the earth become more equally distributed, and by improvements in agriculture they are continually multiplied, to the great advantage of the whole family of mankind.

It is partly in consequence of this improvement of the human species, as we may call it, that the earth itself is in a state of improvement, the cultivated parts continually gaining ground on the uncultivated ones; by which means, besides many other advantages, even the inclemencies of the weather are, in some measure, lessened, and the world becomes a more healthy and pleasurable abode for its most important inhabitants. If things proceed as they have done in these respects, the earth will become a paradise, compared to what it was formerly, or with what it is at present.

It is a considerable evidence of the goodness of God, that the inanimate parts of nature, as the surface of the earth, the air, water, salts, minerals, &c., are adapted to answer the purposes of vegetable and animal life, which abounds every where; and the former of these is evidently subservient to the latter; all the vegetables that we are acquainted with either directly contributing to the support of animal life, or being, in some other way, useful to it; and all animals are furnished with a variety of appetites and powers, which continually prompt them to *seek*, and enable them to *enjoy* some kind of happiness.

It seems to be an evident argument that the author of all things intended the animal creation to be happy, that, when their powers are in their full strength and exercise, they are always happy—health and enjoyment having a natural and necessary connexion through the whole system of nature; whereas it can hardly be imagined, but that a malevolent being, or one who should have made creatures with a design to make them miserable, would have constituted them so, that when any creature was the most perfect, it would have been the most unhappy.

It agrees with the supposition of the benevolence of the Divine Being, that there is the most ample provision made for the happiness of those creatures which are naturally capable of the most enjoyment, particularly the human species. We have a far greater variety and extent of powers, both of action and enjoyment, than any other

inhabitants of the earth ; and the world abounds with more sources of happiness to us than to any other order of beings upon it. So perfectly adapted are the inanimate, the vegetable and the animal world to the occasions and purposes of man, that we may almost say, that every thing was made for our use ; and though there are both plants and animals, which, in some applications, are noxious to us, yet, in time, we come to find out their uses, and learn to avail ourselves of their extraordinary powers.

There are many things in the system of nature, as tempests, lightning, diseases and death, which greatly terrify and annoy us, and which are often the occasion of much pain and distress ; but these evils are only partial ; and when the whole system, of which they are a part, and a necessary consequence, is considered, it will be found to be, as far as we can judge, the best, and the most friendly to us upon the whole ; and, that no other *general laws*, which should obviate and exclude these evils, would have been productive of so much happiness. And it should be a rule with us, when we are considering any particular thing in the system of nature, to take in every thing that is necessarily connected with it, and every thing that we should lose if we were deprived of it ; so that if, upon the whole, we should, in that case, gain more than we should lose, we must pronounce the thing complained of to be beneficial to us, and should thankfully bear the evil, for the sake of the greater good that accompanies it. Fire, for instance, is the occasion of a great deal of mischief and distress in the world, but this is not to be compared with the benefits that we derive from the use of that element.

It may be said, indeed, that the Divine Being might have separated these things, and, if he had been perfectly benevolent, might have given us the good unmixed with evil. But there are many pains and evils which are useful to us, and upon the whole give us a greater enjoyment of life, as being pains and evils in themselves. It is a common observation, that many persons are much happier, in a variety of respects, in the prime of life, and especially towards the close of it, for the pains and the hardships they suffered at their entrance upon it. The difficulties we meet with contribute to strengthen the mind, by furnishing proper exercise both for our passions and our understandings, and they also heighten our relish of the good that we meet with. The more attention we give to evils of all kinds, the more good do we see to accompany them, or to follow them :

so that, for any thing that we know, a better system, that is, a system abounding with more happiness could not have been made than this, even as it is at present; and much more if we suppose, what is very probable, a tendency to much greater happiness in the completion of the whole scheme.

One of the greatest and most striking evils in the system of nature, is, that one animal should be made to prey upon another, as lions, tygers, wolves, eagles, serpents, and other beasts, birds, and insects of prey; and, at first sight, it might seem more agreeable to benevolence, to have formed no such carnivorous creatures; as every animal would then have lived without fear or apprehension, and the world, as we are apt to imagine, would have been the scene of universal peace and joy. But this is the conclusion of a superficial observer. For it may easily be demonstrated, that there is more happiness in the present system than there would have been in that imaginary one; and, therefore, that this constitution of things, notwithstanding its inconveniences, must have appeared preferable in the eye of a benevolent Being.

If all the species of animals had been suffered to multiply without interfering with one another, they would all have soon been involved in famine and distress; and whenever they died, their carcasses would have infected the air, and have made it nauseous and unhealthy; whereas, at present, all animals have, in general, a sufficiency of food; they suffer very little from the fear of danger; while they are in their vigour, they are pretty well able to defend themselves, or to provide for their safety by flight; when they grow feeble, and life would become a burthen, they serve to support the life and vigour of animals of a different species; and the pangs of a sudden and violent death are not so dreadful as those that are occasioned by lingering sickness. If any animals die by a natural death, there are other animals enow, quadrupeds, birds, and insects, that are ready to seize upon the carcase; and to them it is, in the most putrid state, grateful and wholesome food.

Man is a carnivorous animal, but it is happy for the animals which he lives upon that he is so. What a number of cows, and sheep, and fowls, do we feed, attend upon, and make happy, which, otherwise, would either have had no existence at all, or a very miserable one: and what is a sudden and unexpected death, compared with their previous enjoyment; with a life spent in far greater

pleasure and satisfaction than they could otherwise have known?\*

Farther, all the evils we complain of are the result of what we call *general laws*, in consequence of which the same events invariably follow from the same previous circumstances; and without those general laws, all would be uncertainty and confusion. Thus it follows from the general law of gravitation, that bodies heavier than the air will, when unsupported, fall to the ground. Now cannot we conceive that it is better, upon the whole, that this law of nature, which is productive of a thousand benefits every moment, and whereby the whole earth, and probably the whole universe is held together, should be preserved invariably, than that it should be suspended whenever any temporary inconvenience would arise from it; as whenever a man should step from a precipice, to prevent his breaking his bones, or being dashed to pieces? If there were no general laws of nature, causing the same effects to follow from the same previous circumstances, there would be no exercise for the wisdom and understanding of intelligent beings; and, consequently, we should not be in circumstances in which we could arrive at the proper perfection and happiness of our natures. If there were no general laws, we could not know what events to expect, or depend upon, in consequence of any thing we did. We could have none of that pleasure and satisfaction that we now have in contemplating the course of nature, which might be one thing to-day, and another to-morrow; and as no man could lay a scheme with a prospect of accomplishing it, we should soon become listless and indifferent to every thing, and consequently unhappy.

It may be said, that we might have been differently constituted, so as to have been happy in a world not governed by general laws, and not liable to partial evils. But there is no end of those suppositions, which, for any thing that we can tell, may be, in their own nature, impossible. All that we can do, in these difficult speculations, is, to consider the connexions and tendencies of things as they now are; and if we see reason to conclude that, *ceteris manentibus*, nothing could be changed for the better, we may also conclude that the *system itself* could not be changed for a better; since the same wisdom that has so perfectly adapted the various parts of the same scheme, so as to

make it productive of the most happiness, may well be supposed to have made choice of *the scheme itself*, as calculated to contain the most happiness. Even Divine Power cannot produce impossibilities; and for any thing that we know, it may be as naturally impossible to execute any scheme free from the inconveniences, that we complain of in this, as that *two and two* should make more than *four*.

Upon the whole, the face of things is such as gives us abundant reason to conclude, that God made every thing with a view to the happiness of his creatures and offspring. And we are confirmed in this supposition, from considering the utter impossibility of conceiving of any end that could be answered to himself in the misery of his creatures; whereas the Divine Being may be conceived to rejoice in, and perhaps receive pleasure from the happiness of all around him. This, however, is the most *honourable* idea that we can form of any being; and can it be supposed that our Maker would have constituted us in such a manner, as that our natural ideas of perfection and excellence should not be applicable to the essential attributes of his own nature? Our natural approbation of love and benevolence is, therefore, a proof of the Divine benevolence, as it cannot be supposed that he should have made us to hate, and not to love himself.

That every part of so complex a system as this should be so formed, as to conspire to promote this one great end, namely, the happiness of the creation, is a clear proof of the *wisdom* of God. The proper evidence of *design*, or *contrivance* is, such a fitness of means to gain any end, that the correspondence between them cannot be supposed to be the result of what we call *accident*, or *chance*. Now there are so many adaptations of one thing to another in the system of nature, that the idea of chance is altogether excluded; insomuch, that there is reason enough to conclude, that every thing has its proper use, by means of a designed reference to something else; and that nothing has been made, or is disposed of, but to answer a good and benevolent purpose. And the more closely we inspect the works of God, the more exquisite art and contrivance do we discover in them.\* This is acknowledged by all persons who have made any part of nature their particular

\* Mr. Ray deduced "the admirable art and skill of the Creator—from the incredible smallness of some of those natural and enlivened machines, the bodies of animals," when compared by the microscope with the most minute and curious works of human art. *Wisdom of God*. Ed. III. P. 185—189. by Google

study, whether they have been of a religious turn of mind, or not.

We see the greatest wisdom in the distribution of light and heat to the different parts of the earth, by means of the revolution of the earth upon its axis, and its obliquity to the plane in which it moves; so that every climate is not only habitable by men whose constitutions are adapted to it, but every part of the world may be visited by the inhabitants of any other place; and there is no country which the same person is not capable of accustoming himself to, and making tolerable, if not agreeable to him, in a reasonable space of time.

We see the greatest wisdom in the variation of the seasons of the year in the same place, in the provision that is made for watering as well as warming the soil, so as to prepare it for the growth of the various kinds of vegetables that derive their nourishment from it. The wisdom of God appears in adapting the constitutions of vegetables and animals to the climates they were intended to inhabit, in giving all animals the proper means of providing their food, and the necessary powers either of attacking others, or securing themselves by flight, or some other method of evading the pursuit of *their* enemies. The carnivorous and voracious animals have a degree of strength and courage suited to their occasions, whereby they are prompted to seize upon their prey, and are enabled to master and secure it; and the weak have that degree of timidity, which keeps them attentive to every appearance of danger, and warns them to have recourse to some methods of securing themselves from it. We see the greatest wisdom in the provision that is made in nature against the loss or extinction of any species of vegetables or animals, by their easy multiplication, according to the want there is of them. The most useful vegetables grow every where, without care or cultivation, as for example, the different kinds of grass. Small and tame animals breed fast, whereas the large and carnivorous ones propagate very slowly, which keeps the demand on the one hand, and the consumption on the other, nearly equal.

The human body exhibits the clearest and the most numerous marks of wisdom and contrivance, whereby each part receives its proper nourishment, and is fitted for its proper functions, all of which are admirably adapted to our real occasions in life. How conveniently are the organs of all our senses disposed, how well secured, and how

excellently adapted to their proper uses ; and how exceedingly serviceable are all of them to us ! We see the wisdom of God both in what we call the *instincts* of brutes, and the *reason* of man ; each of these principles being exactly fitted to our several occasions.

We also see the wisdom of God in the natural *sanctions of virtue* in this world ; so that those persons who addict themselves to vice and wickedness become miserable and wretched, in the natural course of things, without any particular interposition of Providence ; whereas virtue and integrity are generally rewarded with peace of mind, the approbation of our fellow-creatures, and a reasonable share of security and success.

Could we see all the causes of the rise and fall of empires, and in what manner the happiness of mankind is connected with the great events in the history of the world, it is not to be doubted, but that we should see as much wisdom in the conduct of Divine Providence with respect to them ; so as not to doubt (though we should not have been informed of it by revelation) *that the Lord God ruleth in the kingdoms of men, giving them to whomsoever he pleases*, and promoting his own wise and benevolent purposes by the disposition of them.

Lastly, it is an argument of the wisdom of God, that he has given wisdom to man and other creatures, for he could not give a power of which he was not himself possessed in a much more eminent degree.

These attributes of *power, wisdom and goodness*, are all that we can *directly* demonstrate from the consideration of the works of God. Every other of his attributes is deduced from these ; and since the Divine Being has been proved to be powerful, wise and good, he must likewise be whatever a powerful, wise and good Being cannot but be. These, therefore, together with the attributes of *self-existence, eternity and unchangeableness*, may be called the *primary* attributes of God ; and all others may be called *secondary* ones, or such as depend upon, and flow from those that are primary.

#### SECTION IV.

*Of those Attributes of God which are deduced from the Consideration of his Power, Wisdom and Goodness jointly.*

As the matter of which the world consists can only be moved and acted upon, and is altogether incapable of

moving itself, or of acting; so all the *powers of nature*, or the tendencies of things to their different motions and operations, can only be the effect of the Divine energy, perpetually acting upon them, and causing them to have certain tendencies and effects. A stone, for instance, can no more move, or tend downwards, that is, towards the earth, of itself, than it can move or tend upwards, that is, from the earth. That it does tend downwards, or towards the earth, must, therefore, be owing to the Divine energy, an energy without which the power of gravitation would cease, and the whole frame of the earth be dissolved.

It follows from these principles, that no powers of nature can take place, and that no creature whatever can exist, without the Divine agency; so that we can no more *continue*, than we could *begin* to exist without the Divine will.

God, having made all things, and exerted his influence over all things, must know all things, and consequently be *omniscient*. Also, since he not only ordained, but constantly supports all the laws of nature, he must be able to foresee what will be the result of them, at any distance of time; just as a man who makes a clock can tell when it will strike. All future events, therefore, must be as perfectly known to the Divine mind as those that are present; and as we cannot conceive that he should be liable to forgetfulness, we may conclude that all things, past, present and to come, are equally known to him; so that his knowledge is *infinite*.

The Divine Being, knowing all things, and exerting his influence on all the works of his hands, whereby he supports the existence of every thing that he has made, and maintains the laws which he has established in nature, must be, in a proper sense of the term, *omnipresent*.

Since God made all things to answer an important end, namely, the happiness of his creatures; since his power is so great, that nothing can be too difficult for him; since his knowledge is so extensive, that nothing can pass unnoticed by him; and since the minutest things in the creation, and the most inconsiderable events, may affect the end that he has in view, his *providence* must necessarily extend to all his works; and we may conclude, that he constantly attends to every individual of his creatures, and out of every evil that befalls any of them produces good to themselves or others.

Since God is omnipresent without being the object of any of our senses, he comes under the description of what

we call a *spirit*, or something that is *immaterial*. It must, however, be in his power to make his presence manifest to the human senses, if the purposes of his providence should require it.

We cannot help conceiving that any being must be *happy* when he accomplishes all his designs. The Divine Being, therefore, having power and wisdom to execute all his designs, we infer that he must be happy, and perfectly so. Also, though we cannot say that the consequence is demonstrable, we cannot but think that he who makes us happy, and whose sole end in creating us was to make us happy, must be happy himself, and in a greater degree than we are capable of being.

In all the preceding course of reasoning, we have only argued from what we see, and have supposed nothing more than is necessary to account for what we see; and as a cause is necessary, but not *more causes* than one, we cannot conclude that there are more Gods than *one*, unless some other kind of proof can be brought for it.

Besides, there is such a perfect *harmony* and *uniformity* in the works of nature, and one part so exactly fits and corresponds to another, that there must have been a perfect *uniformity of design* in the whole, which hardly admits of more than one being as the former of it, and presiding over it. It was only the mixture of evil in the world that was the reason why some of the heathens supposed that there are *two principles* in nature, the one the source of good, and the other of evil, the one benevolent, and the other malevolent.

These two principles, they supposed to be at present continually struggling against one another, though it was their opinion that the good would finally prevail. But we have seen that all the evil that there is in the world is a necessary part of the whole scheme, and inseparable from it; so that the good and the evil must have had the same author. Besides, they both conspire to the same end—the happiness of the creation.

Upon the whole, we may remain perfectly satisfied, that there is but *one God*, possessed of all the perfections that have been described; and were our minds equal to this subject, I doubt not but that we should be able to see, that there *could have been* but one, and that two Gods would have been impossible; as much so, as that there should be in nature two universal, infinite spaces, or two eternities, both before and after the present moment. But

because we are incapable of judging what *must have been* in this case, we are content to argue from what *is*; and upon this ground we have reason enough to conclude that *God is one*.

Since the Divine power and wisdom are so amazingly great, that we cannot conceive any effect to which they are not equal; nay, since we are *able to comprehend* but a very small part of the actual effects of the power and wisdom of God, and new views are continually opening to us, which are continually exciting greater admiration, there can be no danger of our exceeding the truth, if we endeavour to conceive of these perfections of God as *infinite*. Indeed, we have sufficient reason to believe that, strictly speaking, they are so; though we are not able directly to demonstrate it: because we, being finite, cannot comprehend any thing that is infinite; and not being able to comprehend an infinite effect, we cannot fully demonstrate infinity in the cause. The *extent*, and other properties of the Divine goodness, I shall consider more at large.

## SECTION V.

### *Of the Properties of the Divine Goodness.*

IF goodness, or benevolence, be the great governing principle, or spring of action in the Divine Being, happiness must prevail amongst those of his creatures that are capable of it. If it were possible that there should be, upon the whole, more misery than happiness in the creation, it would be an argument that the Supreme Being was malevolent. For, since all the tendencies and issues of things were, from the first, perfectly known to him, he would, supposing him to be benevolent, have produced no system at all, rather than one in which misery might prevail. No scheme, therefore, which supposes the greater number of the creatures of God to be miserable upon the whole, can be consistent with the supposition of the Divine benevolence. The *means*, or the *manner* by which the creatures of God are involved in misery, makes no difference in this case; for if it arise even from themselves, it arises from the nature that God has given them. If he had foreseen that the constitution which he gave them would, in the circumstances in which he placed them, issue in their final ruin, he would not have given them that constitution, or have disposed of them in that manner, unless he had intended that they should be finally miserable; that is, unless

he himself had taken pleasure in misery, in consequence of his being of a malevolent disposition.

It must be impossible, for the same reason, that the Divine Being should be capable of sacrificing the interests of a *greater number*, to that of a *few* of his creatures; though it may, perhaps, be necessary, that the interests of a few give place to that of a greater number. For, if he had a desire to produce happiness *at all*, it seems to be an evident consequence, that he must prefer a greater degree of happiness to a less: and a greater sum of happiness can exist in a greater number, than in a smaller.

For the same reason, also, the goodness of God must be *impartial*. Since the Supreme Being stands in an equal relation to all his creatures and offspring, he must be incapable of that kind of partiality, by which we often give the preference to one person above another. There must be a good reason for every thing that looks like *preference* in the conduct and government of God; and no reason can be a good one, with respect to a benevolent Being, but what is founded upon benevolence. If, therefore, some creatures enjoy more happiness than others, it must be because the happiness of the creation in general requires that they should have that preference, and because a less *sum of good* would have been produced upon any other disposition of things.

Thus it is probable that a *variety* in the ranks of creatures, whereby some have a much greater capacity of happiness than others, and are therefore more favoured by Divine Providence than others, makes a *better system*, and one more favourable to general happiness, than any other, in which there should have been a perfect equality in all advantages and enjoyments. We are not, therefore, to say that God is partial to men, because they have greater powers, and enjoy more happiness than worms; but must suppose, that the system in which there was provision for the greatest sum of happiness required that there should be some creatures in the rank of men, and others in the rank of worms; and that each has reason to rejoice in the Divine goodness, though they partake of it in different degrees. Indeed, it were absurd to suppose, that, properly speaking, there was any thing like *preference* in the Divine Being choosing to make *this* a man, and the *other* a worm; because they had no being before they were created; and therefore it could not be any thing like affection to the one more than the other that determined his conduct. In reality it is improper to say that God chose to make *this* a man, and *that* a worm;

for the proper expression is, that he chose to make a *man*, and a *worm*.

Among creatures of the same general class or rank, there may be differences in advantages and in happiness; but they must be founded on the same considerations with the differences in the ranks themselves; that is, it must be favourable to the happiness of the whole that there should be those differences; and it cannot arise from any arbitrary or partial preference of one to another, independent of a regard to the happiness of the whole; which is what we mean by an arbitrary and partial affection.

There is a variety of cases in which we may plainly see, that the happiness of one has a reference to, and is productive of the happiness of others; as in the principle of benevolence, whereby we are naturally disposed to rejoice in the happiness of others. For we cannot procure ourselves these sympathetic pleasures, at least, in any considerable degree, without contributing to the happiness of those around us. This, being a source of pleasure to ourselves, is a constant motive to benevolent actions.

Lastly, if God be benevolent at all, he must be *infinitely* so; at least, we can see no reason why he should wish to make his creation happy *at all*, and not wish to make it as happy *as possible*. If this be the case, the reason why all his creatures are not, at all times, as happy as their natures can bear, must be because *variety* and a *gradual advance* are, in the nature of things, necessary to their complete and final happiness.

Besides, as there is reason to believe that the other perfections of God, his wisdom, power, &c., are infinite, it seems to follow, by analogy, that his goodness must be so too, though we may not be able to prove it demonstrably and consequentially.

It must be owned to be impossible completely to answer every objection that may be made to the supposition of the infinite benevolence of God; for, supposing all his creatures to be constantly happy, still, as there are *degrees of happiness*, it may be asked, why, if their Maker be infinitely benevolent, do not his creatures enjoy a higher degree of it? But this question may always be asked, so long as the happiness of any creature is only *finite*, that is less than infinite, or less than the happiness of God himself, which, in its own nature, it must necessarily be. It must be consistent, therefore, even with the infinite benevolence of God, that his creatures, which are necessarily finite, be finitely, that is

imperfectly happy. And when all the circumstances relating to any being are considered at once, as they are by the Divine mind, positive evils have only the same effect as a diminution of positive good, being balanced, as it were; against a degree of good to which it was equivalent; so that the overplus of happiness which falls to the share of any being, after allowance has been made for the evils which he suffers, is to be considered as his share of *unmixed happiness*.

It is only owing to our imperfection, or the want of *comprehension of mind*, (in which, however, we advance every day) that we are not able to make all our pleasures and pains perfectly to *coalesce*, so as that we shall be affected by the difference only. And whenever we shall be arrived at this state; whenever, by long experience, we shall be able to connect in our minds the ideas of all the things which are causes and effects to one another; all partial evils will absolutely vanish in the contemplation of the greater good with which they are connected. This will be perfectly the case with respect to all *intellectual* pleasures and pains; and even *painful sensations* will be much moderated, and more tolerable under the lively persuasion of their contributing to our happiness on the whole. However, in the light in which the Divine Being, who has this perfect comprehension, views his works (and this must be the true light in which they ought to be considered), there is this perfect coincidence of all things that are connected with, and subservient to one another; so that, since all evils are necessarily connected with some good, and generally are directly productive of it, all the works of God appear to him *at all times* very good, happiness greatly abounding upon the whole. And since the works of God are infinite, he contemplates an infinity of happiness, of his own production, and, in his eye, happiness unmixed with evil.

This conclusion, however, is hardly consistent with the supposition that any of the creatures of God are necessarily miserable in the whole of their existence. In the ideas of such creatures, even when they have arrived at the most perfect comprehension of mind, their being must seem a curse to them, and the Author of it will be considered as malevolent with respect to them, though not so to others.

It seems, likewise, to be a reflection upon the *wisdom* of God, that he should not be able to produce the happiness of some, without the final misery of others; and so incapable are we of conceiving how the latter of these can be necessary to the former, that, if we retain the idea of the Divine be-

nevolence, together with that of his power and wisdom, in any high degree, we cannot but reject the supposition. That any of the creatures of God should be finally, and upon the whole, miserable, cannot be a pleasing circumstance to their benevolent Author. Nay, it must, in its own nature, be the last means that he would have recourse to, to gain his end; because, as far as it prevails, it is directly opposed to his end. We may, therefore, rest satisfied that there is no such *blot* in the creation as this; but that all the creatures of God are intended by him to be happy upon the whole. He stands in an equal relation to them all, a relation in which they must all have reason to rejoice. He is their common father, protector and friend.

## SECTION VI.

### *Of the MORAL PERFECTIONS of God, deduced from his Goodness.*

THE power and wisdom of God, together with those attributes which are derived from them, and also those which are deduced from his being considered as an uncaused Being, may be termed his *natural* perfections; whereas, his benevolence, and those other attributes which are deduced from it, are more properly termed his *moral* perfections; because they lead to such conduct as determines what we commonly call *moral character* in men.

The source of all the moral perfections of God seems to be his benevolence; and indeed there is no occasion to suppose him to be influenced by any other principle, in order to account for all that we see. Every other truly venerable or amiable attribute can be nothing but a *modification* of this. A perfectly good, or benevolent Being, must be, in every other respect, whatever can be the object of our reverence, or our love. Indeed the connexion of all the moral virtues, and the derivation of them from the single principle of benevolence, are easily traced, even in human characters.

1. If a magistrate be benevolent, that is, if he really consult the happiness of his subjects, he must be *just* or take notice of crimes, and punish the criminals. Otherwise, he would be cruel to the whole, and especially to the innocent, who would be continually liable to oppression, if there were no restraint of this kind.

2. But whenever an offence can be overlooked, and no injury accrue from it, either to the offender himself, or to others, the benevolence of God, as well as that of a human

magistrate, will require him to be *merciful*; so that implacability, or a desire of revenging an affront, without any regard to the prevention of farther evil, must be carefully excluded from the character of the Divine Being. He must delight in mercy, because he wishes to promote happiness, though he may be under the necessity of punishing obstinate offenders, in order to restrain vice and misery.

There is more room for the display of mercy in the Divine government than in that of men; because men, not being able to distinguish true repentance from the appearance of it, and pretences to it, must make but few deviations from general rules, lest they should increase crimes and hypocrisy; whereas, the secrets of all hearts being open to God, he cannot be imposed upon by any pretences; so that if an offender be truly penitent, and it is known to him that he will not abuse his goodness, he can receive him into favour, without apprehending any inconvenience whatever. Such cases as these, how dangerous soever the precedent might be in human governments, are not liable to be abused in the perfect administration of the Divine Being. Justice and mercy, therefore, are equally attributes of the Divine Being, and equally deducible from his goodness or benevolence; both, in their places, being necessary to promote the happiness of his creation.

3. As perfect benevolence is the rule of the Divine conduct, and leads him to be both just and merciful, so we cannot but conceive that he must govern his conduct by every other rule that we find to be equally necessary to the well-being of society, particularly that of truth, or *veracity*. All human confidence would cease if we could not depend upon one another's word; and, in those circumstances, every advantage of society would be lost. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that the Divine Being, if he should think proper to have any intercourse with his creatures, must be equally removed from a possibility of attempting to impose upon them.

4. As to those vices which arise from the irregular indulgence of our appetites and passions, we can have no idea of the possibility of their having any place in the Divine Being. We therefore conclude that he is, in all respects, *holy*, as well as just and good.

There are, also, some evidences of the justice and mercy of God in the course of providence. The constitution of human nature and of the world is such, that men cannot long persist in any species of wickedness without being suf-

ferers in consequence of it. Intemperance lays the foundation for many painful and dangerous diseases. Every species of malevolence and inhumanity consists of uneasy sensations, and exposes the person in whom they are predominant to the hatred and ill-offices of his fellow-creatures. Want of veracity destroys a man's credit in society; and all vices may make men subject to contempt, or dislike; whereas the habitual practice of the contrary virtues promotes health of body and peace of mind; and, in general, they insure to him the esteem and good offices of all those with whom he is connected.

Now, since these evils which attend upon vice, and this happiness which results from virtue, are the Divine appointment (since they take place in consequence of his constitution of the course of nature), they may be considered as the natural punishments of vice, and the natural rewards of virtue, distributed according to the rules of justice and equity, and intended to inculcate the most useful moral lessons on all his intelligent offspring, the subjects of his moral government.

We, also, see something like the exercise of *mercy* in the conduct of the Divine providence; since the natural punishments of vice seldom take place immediately, but leave a man room to recollect, and recover himself; and, if, after a man *has* been addicted to vice, he become truly reformed, the inconveniences he has brought upon himself are, in general, either removed, or mitigated; so that he finds his condition the better for it.

It may, also, according to the reasoning applied in a former case, be considered as an argument for all the perfections of God, that we are so formed, that we cannot but approve of, and esteem every branch of virtue. For it cannot be supposed that our Maker would have formed us in such a manner, as that he himself should be the object of our dislike and abhorrence. Our natural love of goodness and virtue, therefore, is a proof that every branch of it enters into the character of the Divine Being, and, consequently, that those qualities are the objects of his favour and approbation.

Since, however, all the moral perfections of God are derived from his benevolence, so that holiness, justice, mercy and truth are in him only modifications, as it were, of simple goodness, we should endeavour to conceive of him, as much as possible, according to his real nature; considering benevolence as his sole ruling principle, and the proper spring

of all his actions. This is, also, the most *honourable* and the most *amiable* light in which we can view him, remembering that goodness necessarily implies what we call justice, though its natural form be that of mercy.

Upon the whole, it must be acknowledged, that it is but a very imperfect idea that we can form of the *moral* perfections of God from the light of nature. It hardly amounts to what may be called an idea of his *character*. We know nothing of God by the light of nature, but through the medium of his works; and these are such as we cannot fully comprehend; both the efficient and the final causes being, in many cases, unknown to us: whereas the clearer ideas we have of the characters of men, are acquired from a reflection upon such parts of their conduct as we can both fully comprehend, and are capable of, ourselves; so that we can tell precisely how we should *feel* and be disposed, if we acted in the same manner. The knowledge, also, of the *manner in which men express themselves*, upon known occasions, is a great help to us in judging of what they feel, and consequently in investigating their proper character; and this is an advantage of which we are entirely destitute with respect to God, on the principles of the light of nature.

It is from *revelation* chiefly, if not only, that we get a just idea of what we may call the proper character of the Divine Being. There we may both hear his declarations, and see various specimens of his conduct, with respect to a variety of persons and occasions; by which means we have the best opportunity of entering, as it were, into his sentiments, perceiving his disposition, learning what are the objects of his approbation or dislike, in short, of gaining a proper and distinct idea of his *moral character*.

## CHAPTER II.

OF THE DUTY AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF MANKIND.

## SECTION I.

*Of the Rule of Right and Wrong.*

HAVING seen what it is that nature teaches us concerning GOD, our next inquiry respects the proper *rule of human conduct*, and our *expectations*, grounded upon that conduct. No man comes into the world to be idle. Every man is furnished with a variety of passions, which will continually engage him in some pursuit or other; and the great question we have to decide is, what passions we ought to indulge, and what pursuits we ought to engage in. Now there are several very proper rules by which to form our judgment in this case; because there are several just objects that we ought to have in view in our conduct. It is very happy, however, that this variety in our views can never mislead us, since all the great ends we ought to keep in view are gained by the same means. They are, therefore, like so many different clues to lead to the same end; and in the following inquiry I shall make use of any one of them, or all of them, as it may happen that, in any particular case, they can be applied to the most advantage.

Strictly speaking, there are no more than two just and independent rules of human conduct, according to the light of nature, one of which is obedience to the will of God, and the other a regard to our own real happiness; for another rule, which is a regard to the good of others, exactly coincides with a regard to the will of God; since all that we know of the will of God, according to the light of nature, is his desire that all his creatures should be happy, and therefore that they should all contribute to the happiness of each other. In revelation we learn the will of God in a more direct method; and then obedience to God, and a regard to the good of others will be distinct and independent principles of action, though they both enjoin the same thing. The fourth, and last rule of human conduct, is a regard to the dictates of *conscience*. But this is only the substitute

of the other principles, and, in fact, arises from them; prompting to right conduct on emergencies, where there is no time for reasoning or reflection; and where, consequently, no proper rule of conduct could be applied.

Having thus pointed out the proper distinction and connexion of these rules, I shall consider each of them separately. The first object of inquiry, in order to investigate the proper rule of right and wrong is, what kind of conduct the Divine Being most approves.

Now the Divine Being, whose own object, as has been shewn, is the happiness of his creatures, will certainly most approve of those sentiments, and of that conduct of ours, by which that happiness is best provided for; and this conduct must deserve to be called *right* and *proper* in the strictest sense of the words. If we examine the workmanship of any artist, our only rule of judging of what is right or wrong with respect to it, is its fitness to answer his design in making it. Whatever, in its structure, is adapted to gain that end, we immediately pronounce to be *as it should be*, and whatever obstructs his design, we pronounce to be *wrong*, and to want correction. The same method of judging may be transferred to the works of God; so that whatever it be, in the sentiments or conduct of men, that concurs with, and promotes the design of our Maker, we must pronounce to be, therefore, *right*; and whatever tends to thwart and obstruct his end, we ought to call *wrong*: because, when the former prevails, the great object of the whole system is gained: whereas, when the latter takes place, that end and design is defeated.

2. On the other hand, if we were to form a rule for our conduct independent of any regard to the Divine Being, we should certainly conclude that it is the part of wisdom, to provide for our greatest happiness; and, consequently, that we should cherish those sentiments, and adopt that conduct, by which it will be best secured. But this rule must coincide with the former; because our happiness is an object with the Divine Being no less than it is with ourselves; for it has been shewn, that benevolence is the spring of all his actions, and that he made us, to be happy.

3. Since, however, the Divine goodness is general, and impartial, and he must, consequently, prefer the happiness of the *whole* to that of any *individuals*, it cannot be his pleasure, that we should consult our own interest, at the expense of that of others. Considering ourselves, therefore, not as separate individuals, but as members of society, another

object that we ought to have in view is, the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and of mankind at large. But still there is no real disagreement among these different rules of conduct, because we are so made, as social beings, that every man provides the most effectually for his own happiness, when he cultivates those sentiments, and pursues that conduct, which, at the same time, most eminently conduce to the welfare of those with whom he is connected. Such is the wisdom of this admirable constitution, that every individual of the system gains his own ends, and those of his Maker, by the same means.

The last rule is *conscience*, which is the result of a great variety of impressions, the conclusions of our own minds, and the opinions of others, respecting what is right and fit in our conduct, forming a set of maxims which are ready to be applied upon every emergency, where there would be no time for reason or reflection. Conscience, being a principle thus formed, is properly considered as a *substitute* for the three other rules, viz. a regard to the will of God, to our own greatest happiness, and the good of others, and it is, in fact, improved and corrected from time to time by having recourse to these rules. This principle of conscience, therefore, being, as it were, the result of all the other principles of our conduct united, must deserve to be considered as the guide of life, together with them; and its dictates, though they vary, in some measure, with education, and will be found to be, in some respects, different among different nations of the world, yet, in general, evidently concur in giving their sanction to the same rules of conduct, that are suggested by the three before-mentioned considerations. For, if we consider what kind of sentiments and conduct mankind in general will, without much reflection, and without hesitation, pronounce to be right; if we consider what are the actions that we most esteem and admire in others, and that we reflect upon with the most satisfaction in ourselves, they will appear to be the same with those which tend to make ourselves and others the most truly happy.

Following these four guides, we shall find that temperance, or the due government of our passions, with respect to ourselves; justice, benevolence and veracity with respect to others; together with gratitude, obedience and resignation to God, ought to be most assiduously cultivated by us; as what are, at the same time, the most pleasing to our Maker, the most conducive to our own happiness, and that of others, and the most agreeable to the natural and unperverted dictates of conscience.

That we are capable of governing ourselves by these rules, and, from a proper regard to motives, can voluntarily choose and pursue that course of life which the will of God, a regard to our own happiness, to the good of society, and the dictates of our consciences, uniformly recommend to us, is sometimes expressed by saying that *we are the proper subjects of moral government*. Unless we suppose that men have this voluntary power over their actions, whereby they can, at pleasure, either obey or disobey the proper rule of life; that is, unless they be so constituted, that the proper motives to right conduct can have a sufficient influence upon their minds, all religion is in vain. To what purpose can it be to give men a law, which it is not in their power to observe; or what propriety can there be either in rewarding them for actions to which they could not contribute, or in punishing them for offences which they could not help?

We may, therefore, take it for granted, as the first and most fundamental principle of all religion, as necessary to our being the proper subjects of moral government, that we are equally capable of intending and doing both good and evil; and therefore that it is not in vain that laws are proposed to us, and motives are laid before us, both to persuade us to what is right, and to dissuade us from what is wrong, since it depends upon ourselves, whether we will be influenced by them or not.

If we observe the proper rules of conduct, or the laws of our natures, we shall secure to ourselves many solid advantages; and if we do not observe them, we entail upon ourselves many evils. These are, therefore, called the *punishments of vice*, and the former the *rewards of virtue*; and since they are dispensed by the providence of God, and take place according to his appointment, in the constitution of the course of nature, he is properly considered as our *moral governor*, and *judge*, and we are said to be *accountable* to him for our conduct.

From a regard to the four rules of right and wrong, explained above, I shall now endeavour to analyze the sentiments, the passions and affections of mankind, and lay down particular rules for our conduct in life.

## SECTION II.

*Of the different Objects of Pursuit, and the different Passions and Affections of Men corresponding to them.*

In order to form a proper judgment concerning the conduct of man, as an individual, and a member of society, according

to the rules above laid down, it will be necessary to have a just idea of, and to keep in view, the different objects of our pursuits, and the different passions and affections of our nature corresponding to them.

We find ourselves placed in a world, in which we are surrounded by a variety of objects, which are capable of giving us pleasure and pain; and finding by our own experience, and the information of others, in what manner each of them is adapted to affect us, we learn to desire some of them, and feel an aversion to others. To these desires and aversions we give the name of *passions* or *affections*, and we generally class them according to the objects to which they correspond. These passions and affections are the springs of all our actions, and by their means we are engaged in a variety of interesting pursuits through the whole course of our lives. When we succeed in our pursuits, or are in hopes of succeeding, we are happy; and when we are disappointed in our schemes, or in fear of being so, we are unhappy.

1. The first and lowest class of our desires is that by which we are prompted to seek after corporeal or sensual pleasure, and consequently to avoid bodily pain. These *appetites*, as they are usually called, to distinguish them from *passions* of a more refined nature, are common with us and the brutes; and to all appearance they are possessed of them in as high a degree as we are, and are capable of receiving as much pleasure from them as we are. Indeed, the *final cause*, or the *object* of these appetites is the very same with respect to both, namely, the continuance of life, and the propagation of the species. It was necessary, therefore, that all animals, which have equally their own subsistence, and the continuance of their species to provide for, should be equally furnished with them.

2. It happens, from a variety of causes, that pleasurable ideas are transferred, by association, upon objects which have not, originally, and in themselves, the power of gratifying any of our senses; as those which give us the ideas that we call *beautiful* or *sublime*, particularly those that occur in works of genius, strokes of wit, and in the polite arts of music, painting and poetry. Our capacity for enjoying pleasures of this kind, depending upon the association of our ideas, and requiring such advances in intellectual life as brutes are incapable of, they are, therefore, classed under the general denomination of *intellectual pleasures* (a name which we give to all our pleasures, except those of sense), and more particularly under the head of *pleasures of imagination*;

because the greater part of them are founded on those resemblances of things, which are perceived and recollected by that modification of our intellectual powers which we call *fancy*.

3. Another class of our passions may be termed the *social*, because they arise from our connexions with our fellow-creatures of mankind; and these are of two kinds, consisting either in our desire of their good opinion, or in our wishing their happiness or misery. In this latter species of the class, we also comprise gratitude for the favours, and a resentment of the wrongs we receive from them.

Those affections of the mind which respect the Divine Being, belong to this class, the object of them being one with whom we have the most intimate connexion, to whom we are under the greatest obligation, and whose approbation is of the greatest importance to us. All the difference there is between our affections, considered as having God or man for their object, arises from the difference of their situation with respect to us. The Divine Being, standing in no need of our services, is, therefore, no object of our benevolence, properly so called; but the sentiments of reverence, love and confidence, with respect to God, are of the same nature with those which we exercise towards our fellow-creatures, only infinitely exceeding them in *degree*, as the Divine power, wisdom and goodness, infinitely exceed every thing of the same kind in man.

Some of the brutes, living in a kind of imperfect society, and particularly domestic animals, are capable of several of the passions belonging to this class, as gratitude, love, hatred, &c.; but having only a small degree of intellect, they are hardly capable of those which have for their object the esteem or good opinion of others; which seem to require a considerable degree of refinement. We see, however, in horses, and some other animals, the strongest emulation, by which they will exert themselves to the utmost in their endeavours to surpass, and overcome others.

4. A fourth set of passions is that which has for its object our own *interest* in general, and is called *self-love*. This seems to require a considerable degree of refinement, and therefore it is probable that brute animals have no idea of it. Their chief object is the gratification of their appetites or passions, without reflecting upon their *happiness in general*, or having any such thing in view in their actions.

There is a lower kind of self-interest, or rather *selfishness*, the object of which is the means of procuring those

gratifications to which money can be subservient; and from loving money as a *means* of procuring a variety of pleasures and conveniencies, a man may at length come to pursue it as an *end*, and without any regard to the proper use of it. It then becomes a new kind of passion, quite distinct from any other; inasomuch, that, in order to indulge it, many persons will deprive themselves of every natural gratification.

5. Lastly, as soon as we begin to distinguish among our actions, and are sensible that there are reasons for some of them, and against others, we get a notion of some of them as what *ought* to be performed, and of others of them as what are, or ought to be refrained from. In this manner we get the abstract ideas of *right and wrong* in human actions, and a variety of pleasing circumstances attending the former, and disagreeable ones accompanying the latter, we come in time to love some kind of actions, and to abhor others, without regard to any other consideration. For the same reason certain tempers, or dispositions of mind, as leading to certain kinds of conduct, become the objects of this moral approbation or disapprobation; and from the whole, arises what we call a *moral sense*, or a love of virtue and a hatred of vice in the abstract. This is the greatest refinement of which we are capable, and in the due exercise and gratification of it consists the highest perfection and happiness of our natures.

### SECTION III.

*Of the RULING PASSION, and an Estimate of the Propriety and Value of the different Pursuits of Mankind.*

HAVING given this general delineation of the various passions and affections of human nature, which may be called the springs of all our actions (since every thing that we do is something that we are prompted to by one or more of them), I shall now proceed to examine them separately, in order to ascertain how far we ought to be influenced by any of them, and in what cases, or degrees, the indulgence of any of them becomes wrong and criminal.

Actuated as we are by a variety of passions, it can hardly be but that some of them will have more influence over us than others. These are sometimes called *ruling passions*, because, whenever it happens that the gratification of some interferes with that of others, all the rest will give place to these. If, for instance, any man's ruling passion be the love of money, he will deny himself any of the pleasures of

life for the sake of it ; whereas, if the love of pleasure were his ruling passion, he would often run the risk of impoverishing himself, rather than not procure his favourite indulgence.

It must be of great importance, therefore, to know which ought to be our ruling passions through life, or what are those gratifications and pursuits to which we ought to sacrifice every thing else. This is the object of our present inquiry, in conducting which we must consider how far the indulgence of any particular passion is consistent with our regard to the four rules of conduct that have been explained ; namely, the will of God, our own best interest, the good of others, and the natural dictates of our conscience ; and in estimating the value of any particular enjoyment, with respect to the happiness we receive from it, we must consider how great or intense it is, how long it will continue, whether we regard the nature of the sense from which it is derived, or the opportunities we may have of procuring the gratification of it, and lastly, how far it is consistent, or inconsistent, with other pleasures of our nature, more or less valuable than itself.

### I. *Of the Pleasures of Sense.*

SINCE no appetite or passion belonging to our frame was given us in vain, we may conclude, that there cannot be any thing wrong in the simple gratification of *any* desire that our Maker has implanted in us, under certain limitations and in certain circumstances ; and if we consider the proper object of any of our appetites, or the end it is calculated to answer, it will be a rule for us in determining how far the Divine Being intended that they should be indulged. Now some of our sensual appetites have for their proper object the support of life, and others the propagation of the species. They should, therefore, be indulged as far as is necessary for these purposes, and where the indulgence is not so excessive, or so circumstanced, as to interfere with the greater good of ourselves and others.

1. But to make the gratification of our senses our *primary* pursuit, must be absurd ; for the appetite for food is given us for the sake of supporting life, and not life for the sake of consuming food. The like may be said of other sensual appetites. Since, therefore, we certainly err from the intention of nature when we make that an *end*, which was plainly meant to be no more than a *means* to some farther end ; whatever this great end of life be, we may conclude

that it cannot be the gratification of our sensual appetites, for they themselves are only a means to something else.

2. To make the gratification of our bodily senses the chief end of living, would tend to defeat itself; for a man who should have no other end in view would be apt so to overcharge and surfeit his senses, that they would become indisposed for their proper functions, and indulgence would occasion nothing but a painful loathing. By intemperance also in eating and drinking, and in all other corporeal pleasures, the powers of the body itself are weakened, and a foundation is laid for disorders the most loathsome to behold, the most painful to endure, and the most fatal in their tendencies and issues. The ingenuity of man cannot contrive any torture so exquisite, and at the same time of so long continuance, as those which are occasioned by the irregular indulgence of the senses; whereas temperance, and occasional abstinence, is a means of keeping all the bodily organs and senses in their proper tone, disposed to relish their proper gratifications; so that they shall give a man the most true and exquisite enjoyment even of sensual pleasure. They prolong life to the utmost term of nature, and contribute to a peaceful and easy death.

3. An addictedness to sensual pleasure blunts the faculties of the mind, being injurious to mental apprehension, and all the finer feelings of the soul, and consequently deprives a man of a great many sources of pleasure which he might otherwise enjoy, and particularly of that most valuable complacency which he might have in his own dispositions and conduct, from a proper and temperate use of the good things of life.

4. Sensual indulgences, though, to a certain degree, and in certain circumstances, they seem to promote benevolence, are evidently unfriendly to it when carried beyond that degree; for though moderate eating and drinking in company promotes cheerfulness and good humour, excess frequently gives occasion to quarrelling and contention, and sometimes even to murder. Also, when a man makes the indulgence of his appetites his primary pursuit, besides incapacitating himself for the service of mankind in any important respect, he will scruple no means, however base, cruel, or unjust, to procure himself his favourite pleasures, which he conceives to be in a manner necessary to his being.

5. With respect to the bulk of mankind, whose circumstances in life are low, the sole pursuit of sensual pleasure

is exceedingly injurious to that industry which is necessary to their support. Indeed, it is often sufficient to dissipate the most ample fortune, and reduce men from affluence to poverty, which, in such circumstances, they are least able to struggle with.

It is impossible that we should not condemn a disposition and pursuit so circumstanced as this. An addictedness to sensual pleasure is manifestly incompatible with our own true interest, it is injurious to others, and on both these accounts, must be contrary to the will of God. The vices of gluttony, drunkenness and lewdness, are, also, clearly contrary to the natural dictates of our minds; and every man who is guilty of them, feels himself to be despicable and criminal, both in his own eyes, and those of others.

The only rule with respect to our *diet*, is to prefer those kinds, and that quantity of food, which most conduces to the health and vigour of our bodies. Whatever in eating or drinking is inconsistent with, and obstructs this end, is wrong, and should carefully be avoided; and every man's own experience, assisted with a little information from others, will be sufficient to inform him what is nearly the best for himself in both these respects; so that no person is likely to injure himself much through mere mistake.

With respect to those appetites that are subservient to the propagation of the species, I would observe, that the experience of ages testifies, that *marriage*, at a proper time of life, whereby one man is confined to one woman, is most favourable to health and the true enjoyment of life. It is a means of raising the greatest number of healthy children, and makes the best provision for their instruction and settlement in life; and nothing more need be said to shew that this state of life has every character of what is right, and what ought to be adopted, in preference to every other mode of indulging our natural passions.

Marriage is, moreover, of excellent use as a means of transferring our affections from ourselves to others. We see, not in extraordinary cases, but generally in common life, that a man even prefers the happiness of his wife and children to his own; and his regard for them is frequently a motive to such industry, and such an exertion of his powers, as would make him exceedingly unhappy, if it were not for the consideration of the benefit that accrues to them from it. Nay, in many cases, we see men risking their lives, and even rushing on certain death, in their defence. The same, also, is generally the attachment of wives to their husbands,

and sometimes, but not so generally, the attachment of children to their parents.\*

We may add, that when once a man's affections have been transferred from himself to others, even his wife and children, they are more easily extended to other persons, still more remote from him, and that, by this means he is in the way of acquiring a principle of general benevolence, patriotism and public spirit, which persons who live to be old without ever marrying are not so generally remarkable for. The attention of these persons having been long confined to themselves, they often grow more and more selfish and narrow-spirited, so as to be actuated in all their pursuits by a joyless desire of accumulating what they cannot consume themselves, and what they must leave to those who, they know, have but little regard for them, and for whom they have but little regard.

A series of family cases (in which a considerable degree of anxiety and painful sympathy have a good effect), greatly improves, and as it were *mellows* the mind of man. It is a kind of exercise and discipline, which eminently fits him for great and generous conduct; and, in fact, makes him a superior kind of being, with respect to the generality of those who have had no family connexions.

On the other hand, a course of lewd indulgence, without family cases, sinks a man below his natural level. Promiscuous commerce gives an indelible, vicious taint to the imagination, so that, to the latest term of life, those ideas will be predominant, which are proper only to youthful vigour. And what in nature is more wretched, absurd and despicable, than to have the mind continually haunted with ideas of pleasures which cannot be enjoyed, and which ought to have been long abandoned, for entertainments more suited to years; and from which, if persons had been properly trained, they would, in the course of nature, have been prepared to receive much greater and superior satisfaction?

Besides, all the pleasures of the sexes in the human species, who cannot sink themselves so low as the brutes, depend much upon *opinion*, or particular mental attachment; and consequently, they are greatly heightened by sentiments of *love* and *affection*, which have no place with common prostitutes, or concubines, where the connexion is only occasional or temporary, and consequently slight. Those

\* See this difference well explained by Charron, *De la Sagesse*, L. iii. Ch. 14. Sect. 35, or Stanhope's Translation, 8vo. 1729, iii. 1375.

persons, therefore, who give themselves up to the lawless indulgence of their passions, besides being exposed to the most loathsome and painful disorders, besides exhausting the powers of nature prematurely, and subjecting themselves to severe remorse of mind, have not (whatever they may fancy or pretend) any thing like the real pleasure and satisfaction that persons generally have in the married state.

## II. *Of the Pleasures of Imagination.*

As we ought not to make the gratification of our external senses the main end of life, so neither ought we to indulge our taste for the more refined pleasures, those called the pleasures of imagination, without some bounds. The cultivation of a taste for propriety, beauty and sublimity, in objects natural or artificial, particularly for the pleasures of music, painting and poetry, is very proper in younger life, as it serves to draw off the attention from gross animal gratifications, and to bring us a step farther into intellectual life, so as to lay a foundation for higher attainments. But if we stop here, and devote our whole time, and all our faculties to these objects, we shall certainly fall short of the proper end of life.

1. These objects, in general, only give pleasure to a certain degree, and are a source of more pain than pleasure when a person's taste is arrived to a certain pitch of correctness and delicacy: for then hardly any thing will please, but every thing will give disgust that comes not up to such an ideal standard of perfection as few things in this world ever reach: so that, upon the whole, in this life, at least in this country, a person whose taste is no higher than a *mediocrity*, stands the best chance for enjoying the pleasures of imagination; and consequently, all the time and application that is more than necessary to acquire this mediocrity of taste, or excellence in the arts respecting it, are wholly lost.

Since, however, the persons and objects with which a man is habitually conversant, are much in his own power, a considerable refinement of taste may not, perhaps, in all cases, impair the happiness of life, but, under the direction of prudence, may multiply the pleasures of it, and give a person a more exquisite enjoyment of it.

2. Very great refinement and taste, and great excellence in those arts which are the object of it, are the parents of such excessive *vanity*, as exposes a man to a variety of mortifications and disappointments in life. They are also very

apt to produce envy, jealousy, peevishness, malice and other dispositions of mind, which are both uneasy to a man's self, and disqualify him for contributing to the pleasure and happiness of others. This is more especially the case where a man's excellence lies chiefly in a single thing, which, from confining his attention to it, will be imagined to be of extraordinary consequence, while every other kind of excellence will be undervalued.

3. With respect to many persons, a great refinement of taste is attended with the same inconveniences as an addictedness to sensual pleasure ; for it is apt to lead them into many expenses, and make them despise plain, honest industry ; whereby they are frequently brought into a state of poverty, surrounded with a thousand artificial wants, and without the means of gratifying them.

A taste for the pleasures of imagination ought, more particularly, to be indulged, and even encouraged, in younger life, in the interval between a state of mere animal nature, in a child, and the serious pursuits of manhood. It is also a means of relaxing the mind from too close an attention to serious business, through the whole of life, promoting innocent amusement, cheerfulness and good humour. Besides, a taste for natural, and also for artificial propriety, beauty and sublimity, has a connexion with a taste for moral propriety, moral beauty and dignity, and when properly cultivated, enables us to take more pleasure in the contemplation of the works, perfections and providence of God. Here, indeed, it is, that a just taste for these refined pleasures finds its highest and most perfect gratification : for it is in these contemplations, that instances of the most exquisite propriety, beauty and grandeur occur.

### III. *Of Self-interest.*

A regard to our greatest happiness was allowed before to be one of the proper rules of our conduct ; but at the same time it was shewn to be only one of four ; and in fact the proper end of it, or our greatest happiness as individuals, is most effectually gained, when it is not itself the *immediate* scope of our actions ; that is, when we have not our interest directly in view, but when we are actuated by a disinterested regard to the good of others, to the commands of God, and to the dictates of conscience.

1. When we keep up a regard to ourselves in our conduct, we can never exclude such a degree of anxiety, and jealousy

of others, as will always make us in some degree unhappy ; and we find by experience, that no persons have so true and unallayed enjoyments, as those who lose sight of themselves, and of all regard to their own happiness, in higher and greater pursuits.

2. Though it be true, that, when our interest is perfectly understood, it will be found to be best promoted by those actions which are dictated by a regard to the good of others, &c., it requires great comprehension of mind even to see this, and much more to act upon it ; so that if the bulk of mankind were taught to pursue their own proper happiness, as the *ultimate end* of life, they would be led to do many things injurious to others, not being able to see how they could otherwise make the best provision for themselves.

3. If we consult the unperturbed dictates of our minds, we shall feel that there is a kind of *meanness* in a man's acting from a view to his own interest only ; and if any person were known to have no higher motive for his conduct, though he should have so much comprehension of mind, as that this principle should never mislead him, and every particular action which he was led to by it should be, in itself, always right, he would not be allowed to have any *moral worth*, so as to command our *esteem* ; and he would not at all engage our *love*. All we could say in his favour would be that he was a *prudent* man, not that he was *virtuous*. Nay, we should not allow that any man's conduct was even *right*, in the highest and most proper sense of the word, unless he was influenced by motives of a higher and purer nature ; namely, a regard to the will of God, to the good of others, or to the dictates of conscience.

It seems to follow from these considerations, that this principle, of a regard to our highest interest, holds a kind of *middle rank* between the vices and the virtues ; and that its principal use is to be a means of raising us above all the lower and vicious pursuits, to those that are higher, and properly speaking, virtuous and praise-worthy. From a regard to our true interest, or mere self-love, we are first of all made sensible that we should injure ourselves by making the gratification of our senses, or the pleasures of imagination, &c., our chief pursuit, and the great business and end of life ; and we are convinced that it is our wisdom to pay a supreme regard to the will of our Maker, to employ ourselves in doing good to others, and, universally, to obey the dictates of our consciences. This persuasion will lead

us to do those things which we know to be agreeable to those higher principles, though we cannot immediately see them to be for our interest ; and, by degrees, we shall get a habit of acting in the most pious, generous and conscientious manner, without ever having our own happiness in view, or in the least attending to any connexion, immediate or distant, that our conduct has with it.

On these accounts, it seems better not to consider any kind of self-interest as an ultimate rule of our conduct ; but that, independent of any regard to our own happiness, we should think ourselves obliged conscientiously to do what is right, and generously and disinterestedly to pursue the good of others, though, to all appearance, we sacrifice our own to it ; and at all events to conform to the will of our Maker, who, standing in an equal relation to all his offspring, must wish the good of them all, and therefore cannot approve of our consulting our own happiness at the expense of that of others, but must rather take pleasure in seeing us act upon the maxims of his own generous benevolence ; depending, in general, that that great, righteous and good Being, who approves of our conduct, will not suffer us to be losers by it upon the whole.

There is a lower species of self-interest, or *selfishness*, consisting in the *love of money*, which, beyond a certain degree, is highly deserving of censure. As a means of procuring ourselves any kind of gratification, that can be purchased, the love of money is a passion of the same nature, with a fondness for that species of pleasure which can be purchased with it. If, for instance, a man makes no other use of his wealth than to procure the means of sensual pleasure, the love of money, in him, is only another name for the love of pleasure : if a man accumulates money with no other view than to indulge his taste in the refined arts above-mentioned, his love of money is the same thing with a love of the arts : or, lastly, if a man really intends nothing but the good of others, while he is amassing riches, he is actuated by the principle of benevolence.

In short, the love of money, whenever it is pursued, directly and properly, as a *means* to something else, is a passion, the rank of which keeps pace with the *end* that is proposed to be gained by it. But in the pursuit of riches, it is very common to forget the use of money as a means, and to desire it without any farther end, so as even to sacrifice to this pursuit all those appetites and passions, to the gratification

of which it was originally subservient, and for the sake of which only it was originally coveted. In this state the love of money, or the passion we call *covetousness*, is evidently absurd and wrong.

This gross self-interest, which consists in an excessive love of money, as an end, and without any regard to its use, will sometimes bring a man to abridge himself of all the natural enjoyments of life, and engage him in the most laborious pursuits, attended with most painful anxiety of mind; it very often steels his heart against all the feelings of humanity and compassion, and never fails to fill him with envy, jealousy and resentment against all those whom he imagines to be his competitors and rivals. Much less does this sordid passion admit of any of the pleasures that result from a consciousness of the approbation of God, of our fellow-creatures, or of our own minds. In fact, it deprives a man of all the genuine pleasures of his nature, and involves him in much perplexity and distress; the immediate cause of which, though it be often absurd and imaginary, is serious to himself, and makes him appear in a ridiculous light to others.

All these observations, concerning the love of money, are equally true of the love of *power*, or of any thing else, that is originally desirable as a *means* to some farther end, but which afterwards becomes itself an ultimate end of our actions. It is even, in a great measure, true of the love of *knowledge* or *learning*. This is chiefly useful as a means, and is valuable in proportion to the end it is fitted to answer; but, together with the love of riches and power, it is absurd, and to be condemned, when pursued as an end, or for its own sake only.

The amassing of money must be allowed to be reasonable, or at least *excusable*, provided there be a probability that a man may live to enjoy it, or that it may be of use to his posterity, or others in whose welfare he interests himself; but when we see a man persisting in the accumulation of wealth, even to extreme old age, when it would be deemed madness in him to pretend that he could have any real want of it; when he discovers the same avaricious temper, though he has no children, and there is nobody for whom he is known to have the least regard, it is evident that he pursues money as an *end*, or for *its own sake*, and not at all as a *means* to any thing farther. In this case, therefore it is, without doubt, highly criminal, and deserving of the above-mentioned censures.

#### IV. *Of the Passions which arise from our Social Nature.*

The passions and affections which I have hitherto considered are those which belong to us as individuals, and do not necessarily suppose any relation to other beings ; I shall now proceed to treat of those which are of this latter class. And first, of the pleasure that we take in the good opinion of others concerning us, which gives rise to that passion which we call the *love of fame*.

This is a passion that discovers itself pretty early in life, and arises principally from our experience and observation of the many advantages that result from the good opinion of others. In the early part of life this principle is of signal use to us, as a powerful incentive to those actions which procure us the esteem of our fellow-creatures ; which are, in general, the same that are dictated by the principles of benevolence and the moral sense, and also by a regard to the will of God.

But though, by this account, the love of fame is an useful *ally* to virtue, the gratification of it ought by no means to be made our primary pursuit ; because, if it were known that *fame* was the sole end of a man's actions, he would be so far from gaining this end, that he would be despised by mankind in general ; and especially if he were advanced in life, when it is commonly expected that men should be governed by higher and better principles. For no actions are looked upon by the bulk of mankind as properly praise-worthy, but those which proceed from a principle of disinterested benevolence, obedience to God, or a regard to conscience.

2. Besides, *humility* is a principal subject of praise ; and, indeed, without this, no other virtue is held in much esteem. Now this humility supposes such a diffidence of one's self, such a readiness to acknowledge the superiority of others, and also so small a degree of complacence in the contemplation of our own excellencies, as must be inconsistent with our making this pleasure our chief pursuit, and the source of our greatest happiness.

3. In another respect, also, the love of fame, as a primary object of pursuit, tends to defeat itself. We are not pleased with praise, except it come from persons of whose *judgment*, as well as *sincerity*, we have a good opinion ; but the love of fame, as our supreme good, tends to beget such a degree of *self-sufficiency*, and conceit, as makes us despise the rest of mankind ; that is, it makes their praise of little value to us ;

so that the sprightly pleasures of *vanity* naturally give place in time to all the sullenness and moroseness of *pride*.

4. If a man have no other object than reputation, or popularity, he will be led to dwell frequently upon the subject of his own merit, of which he will, consequently, entertain an over-weening and unreasonable opinion ; and this can hardly fail to produce, besides a most ridiculous degree of conceit, so much envy and jealousy, as will make him insufferable in society, and subject him to the most cutting mortifications.

5. If a man's principal object be those qualifications and actions which usually distinguish men, and make them much talked of, both in their own and future ages, such as eminence with respect to genius, excellence in the polite arts, discoveries in science, or great achievements in the arts of peace or war, his chance of succeeding is very small ; for it is not possible that more than a *few* persons, in comparison, can draw the attention of the rest of mankind upon them. And besides that the qualifications which are the foundation of this eminence are very rare among mankind, success depends upon the concurrence of many *circumstances*, independent on a man's self. It is plain, therefore, that very few persons can reasonably hope to distinguish themselves in this manner, and it would certainly be very wrong to propose that as a principal object of pursuit to all mankind, which the bulk of them cannot possibly obtain, or enjoy.

The proper use of this love of fame, as of the principle of self-interest, is to be a means of bringing us within the influence of better and truly virtuous principles, in consequence of begetting a habit of doing the same things which better principles would prompt to. If, for instance, a man should, first of all, perform acts of charity and beneficence from ostentation only, the joy that he actually communicates to others, and the praises he receives for his generosity, from those who are strangers to his real motive, cannot but give him an idea of the purer pleasures of genuine benevolence, from which, and not from a desire of applause only, he will for the future act.

The pleasures that accrue to us from the pursuit of fame, like those of self-interest, are best gained by persons who have them not directly in view. The man who is truly benevolent, pious and conscientious, will, in general, secure the most solid and permanent reputation with mankind ; and if he be so situated as that the practice of any real virtue shall

be deemed unfashionable and subject him to contempt and insult, he will have acquired that *superiority of mind*, which will set him above it ; so that he will not feel any pain from the want of such esteem, as must have been purchased by the violation or neglect of his duty. But he will rather applaud himself, and rejoice that he is not esteemed by persons of certain characters, be they ever so numerous, and distinguished on certain accounts ; finding more than an equivalent recompense in the approbation of his own mind, in the esteem of the wise and good, though they be ever so few, and especially in the favour of God, who is the searcher of hearts, the best judge, and most munificent rewarder of real worth.

### V. *Of the Sympathetic Affections.*

A passion for fame, though it be founded on the relation that men stand in to one another, and therefore supposes society, is of a very different nature from the *social principle*, properly so called, or a disposition to love, and to do kind offices to our fellow-creatures.

1. That it is with the greatest justice that this is ranked among our highest pursuits, has been shewn already. That the study to do good to others, is placed in this rank, must be perfectly agreeable to the will of God, who cannot but intend the happiness of all his offspring, and who is himself actuated by the principle of universal benevolence. If we consult the natural dictates of our conscience, we shall find that it gives the strongest approbation to disinterested benevolence in ourselves or others ; and if we examine how our own highest interest is affected by it, we shall find that, in general, the more exalted is our benevolence, and the more we lay ourselves out to promote the good of others, the more perfect enjoyment we have of ourselves, and the more we are in the way of receiving good offices from others in return ; and, upon the whole, the happier we are likely to be.

2. A man of a truly benevolent disposition, and who makes the good of others the object of his pursuit, will never want opportunities of employing and gratifying himself : for we are so connected with, and dependent upon one another, the small upon the great, and the great upon the small, that, whatever be a man's station in life, if he be of a benevolent disposition, it will always be in his power to oblige others, and thereby indulge himself.

3. A person so benevolent may, in general, depend upon

success in his schemes, because mankind are previously disposed to approve, recommend and countenance benevolent undertakings; and though such a person will see much misery and distress, which he cannot relieve, and which will, consequently, give him some pain; yet upon the whole, his pleasures will be far superior to it; and the pains of sympathy do not, in general, agitate the mind beyond the limits of pleasure. We have even a kind of satisfaction with ourselves in contemplating scenes of distress, though we can only *wish* to relieve the unhappy sufferers. For this reason it is that tragic scenes and tragical stories are so engaging. This kind of satisfaction has even more charms for mankind in general, than the view of many pleasing scenes of life.\*

4. Besides, if to the principle of benevolence be added a strict regard to conscience and confidence in Divine Providence, all the pains of sympathy will almost wholly vanish. If we are conscious that we do all we can to assist and relieve others, we may have perfect satisfaction in ourselves, and may habitually rejoice in the belief of the wisdom and goodness of God; being convinced that all the evils, which we ineffectually strive to remove, are appointed for wise and good purposes; and that, being of a temporary nature, they will finally be absorbed in that infinity of happiness, to which, though in ways unknown to us, we believe them to be subservient.

Every argument by which benevolence is recommended to us condemns *malevolence*, or a disposition to rejoice in the misery, and to grieve at the happiness of others. This baneful disposition may be generated by frequently considering our own interest as in opposition to that of others. For, in this case, at the same time that we receive pleasure from our own gain, we receive pleasure also from their loss, which is connected with it; and for the same reason, when we grieve for our own loss, we grieve at their gain. In this manner emulation, envy, jealousy, and at length actual hatred and malice, are produced in our hearts.

It is for this reason that *gaming* is unfavourable to benevolence, as well as other virtues, and high gaming exceedingly pernicious. For, in this case, every man's gain is directly produced by another's loss; so that the gratification of the one and the disappointment of the other must always

\* See Dr. Barnes "On the Pleasure which the Mind, in many Cases, receives from contemplating Scenes of Distress." *Mem. of the Lit. and Phil. Soc. of Manchester*, or New Ann. Reg. 1785, VI. 108.

go together. Indeed, upon the same just principle, all trade and commerce, all buying and selling is wrong, unless it be to the advantage of both parties.

Malevolent dispositions, besides that they are clearly contrary to the will of God, and the dictates of conscience, are the source of much pain and misery to ourselves. They consist of very uneasy feelings; so that no man can be happy, or enjoy any satisfaction, while he is under the influence of them. Even the pleasures of revenge are shocking to think of, and what a man must despise himself for being capable of relishing and enjoying; and they are, in all cases, infinitely inferior to the noble satisfaction which a man feels in forgiving an injury. There is a meanness in the former, but true greatness of mind and real dignity in the latter, and the pleasure which it gives does not pall upon reflection. Besides, a disposition to do ill-offices to others exposes a man to the hatred and ill-offices of others. The malevolent man arms all mankind against him.

Anger is, indeed, in some cases, reasonable; as when it is directed against the vicious and injurious, who are the pests of society; so that being enemies to such persons is being friends to mankind at large. But here great caution should be used, lest this passion of anger should, as it is very capable of doing, degenerate into pure *ill-will* towards those who are the objects of it. Nay, we should never indulge in anger so far as to cease to have the real good and welfare of the offender at heart, but be ready even to do our greatest personal enemies any kind office in our power, provided that the consequence of it would not be injurious to society. This, indeed, is what the law of universal benevolence plainly requires, as it strictly forbids the doing any *unnecessary* evil; and that evil is unnecessary, which the good and happiness of others does not require. If, therefore, we would appear to act upon this principle, we must be careful so to conduct our resentment, as that it may be manifest that it is with reluctance that we entertain sentiments of enmity.

If it be our duty to bear good-will even to our enemies, much more should we exercise it to our real friends, and use our endeavours to make the most ample return for any kindness that they do to us. Indeed, there is no virtue which has a stronger testimony in the consciences of all men than *gratitude*, and no vice is universally so hateful as ingratitude.

If the good of society be our object, there can be no question, but that *veracity*, with respect to all our declarations, and *fidelity*, with respect to all our engagements, is one of the most important of all social duties. All the purposes of society would be defeated, if falsehood were as common as truth among mankind; and, in those circumstances, all beneficial intercourse would soon cease among them; and notwithstanding temporary inconveniences may sometimes arise from a rigid adherence to truth, they are infinitely overbalanced by the many superior advantages that arise from our depending upon the regard to it being inviolable.

Since an *oath*, or an appeal to the Divine Being, is the most deliberate, and the most solemn of all the modes of asseveration, it ought to be the most scrupulously observed. There is not, in the nature of things, any stronger guard against imposition and deceit; and therefore a person who has once *perjured* himself, deserves not only to be detested and shunned, as the bane of society, but to be expelled out of it.

## VI. *Of the Relative Duties.*

As we stand in a variety of relations to one another, and have much more opportunity of doing kind offices to some than to others, we cannot suppose that the Divine Being intended that our benevolence should be, like his own, *universal* and *impartial*. He stands in the same relation to all his creatures, and he is capable of attending to the wants of them all; whereas, our beneficence is necessarily limited, and therefore should flow the most freely towards those whom we can most conveniently and effectually serve. Besides, the good of the whole will be best provided for by every person making this a rule to himself; whereas, if every person, without any particular regard to his own limited province, should extend his care to the wants of mankind in general, very little good would, in fact, be done by any.

The *domestic relations* of life are the foundation of the strongest claim upon our benevolence and kindness. The interests of *husband and wife* are the same, and inseparable; and they must necessarily pass a very great part of their time together. In these circumstances, to be mutually happy, their affection must be strong and undivided. The welfare of their offspring, likewise, requires this, that they

may give their united care and attention to form their bodies and minds, in order to fit them for the business of life, and to introduce them with advantage into the world.

As nature makes children the charge of their parents in younger life, so it lays an equal obligation on children to provide for their parents, when they are old and infirm, and unable to provide for themselves.

*Masters and servants* are under a variety of mutual obligations; and if that connexion be happy, and mutually advantageous, there must be justice, humanity and liberality on the one hand, requited with fidelity, reasonable submission and affection on the other.

Our own country, likewise, claims a particular preference. We ought to give more attention to its welfare than to that of any other country, and its magistrates are entitled to our particular reverence and respect.

It is for the good of the whole that we proportion our regards and benevolent attention in this manner; that is, regulating them according to those connexions in life that are of the most importance to our own happiness; but still, we should never lose sight of the relation we stand in to all mankind, and to all the creation of God, with respect to whom we are brethren and fellow-subjects; and whenever the interest of ourselves, our own families or country, does not greatly interfere, we should lay ourselves out to do good to strangers and foreigners, or to any persons that may stand in need of our assistance—doing to others as we would they should do to us, which is a rule of the gospel that is perfectly agreeable to natural reason.

## VII. *Of the Theopathic Affections.*

As benevolence, or the love of mankind, so also the love of God, and devotedness to him, bears every character of one of our highest and most proper principles of conduct.

1. This principle interferes with no real gratification, but in such a manner that all the restraint it lays upon any of them is, in reality, favourable to the true and perfect enjoyment we derive from them. No pains that we can expose ourselves to for the sake of mortifying ourselves, can be pleasing to that Being who made us to be happy, and who has, for that purpose, given us the power and the means of a variety of gratifications, suited to our state and condition. In this general manner it is shewn that the love of God, and devotedness to him, is perfectly agreeable to a regard to our own greatest good. This principle must be consistent with

our attention to the good of others, because God is the Father of us all, and we are equally his offspring; and nature teaches us to consider him as our Father, moral Governor and Judge, and, therefore, to reverence, love and obey him without reserve.

2. An entire devotedness to God, faith in his providence and resignation to his will, is the best antidote against all the evils of life. If we firmly believe that nothing comes to pass, respecting ourselves, our friends and our dearest interests, but by his appointment or permission, and that he appoints or permits nothing but for the best purposes, we shall not only *acquiesce*, but *rejoice* in all the events of life, prosperous or adverse. We shall consider every thing as a means to a great, glorious and joyful end, the consideration of which will reflect a lustre upon every thing that leads to it, that has any connexion with it, or the most distant reference to it.

3. Other affections may not always find their proper gratifications, and therefore may be the occasion of *pain* as well as of *pleasure* to us. Even the most benevolent purposes are frequently disappointed, and without faith in the providence of God, who has the good of all his offspring at heart, would be a source of much sorrow and disquiet to us. But the man whose supreme delight arises from the sense of his relation to his Maker, from contemplating his perfections, his works and his providence, and who has no will but his, must be possessed of a never-failing source of joy and satisfaction. Every object that occurs to a person of this disposition will be viewed in the most favourable light; and whether it be immediately pleasurable or painful, the relation it bears to God and his moral government, will make it welcome to him.

4. If we consider the foundation of the duty and affection we owe to God upon the natural principles of right and equity, in the same manner as, from the same natural dictates, we judge of the duty we owe to mankind, we cannot but readily conclude that, if a *human* father, benefactor, governor and judge, is entitled to our love, reverence and obedience, he who is in a much higher and a more perfect sense, our Father, Benefactor, Governor and Judge, must be entitled to a greater portion of our love, reverence and obedience; because, in all these relations, he has done, and is continually doing more, to deserve them. Considering what we have received, and what we daily receive from God, even life and all the powers and enjoyments of it—

considering our present privileges and our future hopes, it is impossible that our attention, attachment, submission and confidence, should exceed what is reasonable and properly due to him.

In the regulation of our devotion, we should carefully avoid both *enthusiasm* and *superstition*, as they both arise from unworthy notions of God, and his moral government. The former consists in a childish fondness, familiarity and warmth of passion, and an aptness on that account, to imagine that we are the peculiar favourites of the Divine Being, who is the father, friend and moral governor of all his creatures. Besides this violent affection cannot, in its own nature, be of long continuance. It will, of course, abate of its fervour; and those who have given way to it will be apt to think of God with the other extreme of coldness and indifference; the consequence of which is often extreme dejection, fear, anxiety and distrust; and sometimes it ends in despair and impiety.

On the other hand, *superstition* arises from mistaking the proper object of the Divine favour and approbation, for want of having a just idea of the moral perfections of God, and of the importance of real virtue. Persons of this character are extremely punctual with respect to the *means* and *circumstantials* of religion, or things that have only an imaginary relation to it, and may be quite foreign to its real nature; instead of bringing to God the devotion of the heart, and the proper fruits of it, in the faithful discharge of the duties of life, in the personal and social capacities. The omission of some mere form or ceremony, shall give such persons more real uneasiness than the neglect of a moral duty; and when they have complied with all the forms which they think requisite to be observed, their consciences are entirely easy, their former guilt has no pressure, and they are ready to contract new debts to be wiped off in the same manner. Almost all the religion of the Mahometans and Papists consists in this kind of superstition,\*

\* This unqualified censure the Author would doubtless, on reconsideration, have retracted. It is scarcely necessary to defend the religion of Pascal and Fenelon, or of our More and Fisher against such an imputation. In behalf of the Mahometans the following authorities may be suitably alleged. The first is a maxim, thus rendered from a Persian manuscript by the learned H. Reland: "Purification of the garment is, as it were, purification of the external husk. Purification of the body is, as it were, purification of the shell; and purification of the heart or soul is, as it were, purification of the kernel. And, indeed, this purification of the mind from the pollution of depraved manners is the chief of all." *Four Treatises concerning the Doctrine, &c. of the Mahometans*, 8vo. 1712, p. 65.

For another authority the following passage may be quoted. It is among Sir

and there is too much of it in all sects and denominations of Christians. I cannot give a clearer idea of the nature of superstition than by what appeared in the conduct of some Roman Catholics in Ireland, who, I have been told, broke into a house, where they were guilty of robbery and murder, but, sitting down to regale themselves, would not taste flesh meat, because it was Friday.

There is no quality of the heart so valuable as a just and manly piety, and nothing so abject as superstition. Superstition and enthusiasm are generally denominated the two *extremes* of religion, and in some senses they are so; but, at the same time, they have a near connexion with one another, and nothing is more common than for persons to pass from the one to the other, or to live under the alternate, or even the constant influence of them both, without entertaining one sentiment of generous and useful devotion. Indeed, the usual ground of the presumption and rapture of the enthusiast is ~~some~~ external observance, or internal feeling, that can have no claim to the solid approbation of a reasonable being.

### VIII. *Of the Obligation of Conscience.*

In order to govern our conduct by a regard to our own true interest, to the good of mankind, or the will of God, it is necessary that we use our reason, that we *think* and *reflect* before we act. Another principle, therefore, was necessary, to dictate to us on sudden *emergencies*, and to prompt us to right action *without reasoning* or thinking at all. This principle we call *conscience*, and being the natural substitute of all the three other rules of right conduct, it must have the same title to our regard. As this principle, however, is a thing of a variable nature, it must be corrected from time to

W. Jones's "Remarks on the Island of Hinzuon or Johanna," which he visited in 1783, on his voyage to India. "As we walked, attended by a crowd of natives, I surprised them by reading aloud an *Arabick* inscription over the gate of a *Mosque*, and still more, when I entered it, by explaining four sentences, which were written very distinctly on the wall, signifying 'that the world was given us for our own edification, not for the purpose of raising sumptuous buildings; life, for the discharge of moral and religious duties, not for pleasurable indulgences; wealth, to be liberally bestowed, not avariciously hoarded; and learning, to produce good actions, not empty disputes.' We could not but respect the temple even of a false prophet, in which we found such excellent morality." *Dissertations*, &c. 8vo. 1792, l. 240. Dr. L. Addison, who lived several years among the Mahometans, says, that "Mahomedism, strictly considered, is a hodge-podge of Judaism, Gentilism and Christianity, which makes it have so many excellent things contained in it." *The first State of Mahomedism*, 8vo. 1679, p. 84. Sir W. Jones remarks more elegantly, that "the *Koran* shines, indeed, with a borrowed light, since most of its beauties are taken from our Scriptures." *Dissertations*, l. 63.

time, by recurring to the principles out of which it was formed. Otherwise, as we see exemplified in fact, conscience may come to dictate things most injurious to our own good, or that of others, and even most dishonourable to God. What impurities, what ridiculous penances and mortifications, yea, what villanies and cruelties do we not find to have been acted by mankind, under the notion of rendering themselves acceptable to the object of their supreme worship!

If, however, a person has been well educated in a Christian and Protestant country, and has lived some time under the influence of good impressions, such as are favourable to virtue and happiness, the dictates of his conscience (which has been formed from those good principles) will generally be right, and may be depended upon not to mislead him. At all events, it is very dangerous to slight and disregard the real dictates of our own minds, so as either to do what we have a feeling of as wrong, and what we condemn ourselves for at the time, or to forbear to do what appears to us to be right, what we think we ought to do, and what we feel a sudden impulse to do. For if we can disregard even an *erroneous conscience*, we may come to disregard the authority of conscience, *in general*, and, *as such*, which, after all, is the surest and best guardian of our virtue.

2. If the principle of conscience has been well formed, in consequence of a just train of sentiments, and proper impressions, since it is the result of rational self-interest, benevolence and piety, jointly, it may be considered as the very quintessence and perfection of our rational natures; so that to do a thing because it is *right*, will be to act from a nobler, and more exalted principle of conduct than any of the others. For it is, in fact, every just principle united, and reduced into one; and, on this account, it will naturally claim the pre-eminence over the dictates of any of them singly, supposing them to clash; and many cases may be put, in which it ought to correct and over-rule any of them.

The regard I have to my own interest, believing it to be my highest, the love I bear to my fellow-creatures, or even what I take to be the command of God, may dictate one thing, when my sense of right and wrong, whether natural or acquired, may dictate another; and it may be safest and best for me to follow this guide. Thus a Papist may really believe that he does good to the souls, by tormenting the

bodies of his fellow-creatures, and thereby does God service, and that it is no sin to deceive heretics ; \* but if he feel an inward reluctance in pursuing persecuting measures, and cannot tell a deliberate falsehood without compunction, we should not hesitate to pronounce that he would do well to forbear that conduct, notwithstanding his belief that he is thereby consulting the good of mankind, and the glory of God ; at least till he hath carefully compared the dictates of his conscience with what he imagined to be the command of God.

3. The satisfaction that results from obeying the dictates of conscience is of a solid and permanent kind, and affords consolation under all the pains and troubles of life. Whatever befall a man, if he can say that he hath done his *duty*, and can believe himself, he will not be wholly unhappy. On the other hand, the pangs of a guilty conscience are the most intolerable of all evils. One villanous action is sufficient to imbitter a man's whole life, and years of remorse will not make the reflection upon it less cutting and disquieting. All the riches, honours and luxuries of life are not sufficient to give ease to the mind of that man, who thoroughly condemns and abhors himself.

4. This mechanical and necessary determination in favour of some actions, and against others, being either connate with the mind, or, which comes to the same thing, arising necessarily from our constitution, as influenced by the circumstances of our being, must have been intended for some very important purpose ; and this, in its own nature, can be no other than to be the monitor and guide of life. It is, in a manner, felt to be the representative of God himself, and therefore, its sentence will be considered as the forerunner of the righteous sentence which our Maker and Sovereign Judge will pass upon us. It is not only present pain that disquiets the guilty mind, but a dread of future and divine judgments ; as, on the other hand, the approbation of our own hearts is the most pleasing feeling a man can have, not on its own account, so much as its being a kind of certificate of the Divine approbation, and a foretaste of his future favour and reward.

\* It is far from being historically correct to confine the spirit or practice of persecution among Christians to a *Papist*. On keeping Faith with Heretics, see "Lord Petre's Letter to Bishop Horsey," 1790, especially the Authorities collected in the Appendix. Also Geddes. *Mod. Apol.* 1800, pp. 131—135.

## SECTION IV.

*Of the Means of Virtue.*

HAVING thus shewn the rank and value of all our passions and affections, or the regard that is due to each in the conduct of our lives; I shall give some practical directions, how to suppress what is irregular and vicious, and promote what is right and virtuous in us.

1. If any of our inferior passions have gained the ascendancy in us, so that a propensity to any species of indulgence is become excessive, and, in consequence of it, bad habits have been formed, it is certainly a man's wisdom, as soon as he begins to suspect that he is in a wrong course, to weigh in his own mind such considerations as have been mentioned above, respecting the nature and tendency of our passions, that he may thoroughly convince himself how foolish a part he has chosen for himself, how injurious his conduct is to others, how displeasing to his Maker, and how much it is the cause of shame and remorse to himself.

It is generally through want of timely *reflection*, that men abandon themselves to irregular indulgences, and contract bad habits; so that if they would give themselves time to *think*, and consider deliberately of the nature and consequences of their conduct, they would choose a wise and virtuous course. For no man is so infatuated as, that, when no particular temptation is present, when he is perfectly master of himself, and cannot but see what is for his true interest, purposely and knowingly to lay aside all regard to it. All mankind wish to be happy, and no man can voluntarily choose to be miserable. Were any man, therefore, truly sensible, that there is no kind of vice to which he does not sacrifice either the health of his body, his reputation with the thinking part of mankind, or even his worldly interest, sometimes all these together, and always the peace and tranquillity of his mind, who would choose to persist in it, admitting that a regard to the good of others, and to the known will of God should have no weight among them; though there are few persons, I believe, who are not more or less influenced even by these generous and disinterested considerations.

2. Particular care should be taken on our entrance into the world, that we contract no bad habits; for such is the nature of habits, that when once a man has been accustomed

to any thing, it may give him the greatest pain to break himself of it, even though he have no pleasure, yea, though he be really unhappy in continuing in it. Youth is, on every account, that time of life which requires our greatest attention, for then only is the mind susceptible of new impressions, so as to be capable of changing for the better.

When once a man's connexions and mode of life have been settled, which is generally before, or soon after he is arrived at thirty years of age, the bent of his mind is completely formed, and it is a thousand to one but that after this there will be no material change in his disposition or conduct to the end of his life. If his mind be vitiated then, there is little hope of a change, without a total revolution in his connexions and affairs; or, unless his mind be roused by some uncommon calamity. In this case, entering, as it were, upon life again, with wisdom bought by experience, his old connexions being broken, and new ones to be formed, he may choose a wiser course, and in time may make it familiar and pleasing to him. But still there is a great danger of his relapsing into his former habits, the first opportunity.

A new set of *principles*, new *views* and *expectations* may be equivalent to such an entire revolution in a man's affairs as was mentioned above. For many persons are so disposed, that if they had more *knowledge*, they would have more *virtue*. Thus the doctrines of a resurrection and of a future state of retribution, produced a very great and speedy change in the moral state of the Heathen world, at the first promulgation of Christianity, affecting the old as well as the young. But when nothing *new* takes place, with respect either to a man's circumstances or his knowledge, there is but little probability that his conduct will be materially affected by an attention to *truths* and *facts*, to the contemplation of which he has been long accustomed.

3. If bad habits have, unhappily, been formed, and a man thinks he has strength of mind to break through them, he has no other way but resolutely to avoid every associated circumstance belonging to them—whatever can so much as lead him to *think* of his former vicious pleasures, particularly the *company* he has formerly kept, and by whose example, insinuations and solicitations, he has been seduced. A man who confides in his fortitude, and wilfully runs into temptation, is almost sure to be overcome. Our only safety, in these cases, consists in flying from the danger, through a wise distrust of ourselves.

4. We must, also, resolutely do whatever we are con-

vinced is right, whether we can immediately take pleasure in it or not. Let a man invariably do his duty, and he will, in time, find a real satisfaction in it, which will increase, as right conduct grows more habitual ; till, in time, notwithstanding the reluctance with which he entered upon a virtuous course, he will have the most sincere pleasure in it, on its own account. He will love virtue for its own sake, and will not change his course of life even though it should not be the most advantageous to him for the present. If the most selfish person in the world would make a point of doing generous things, and thus get a custom of befriending and relieving others, till he should look upon it as his indispensable *business*, and his proper *employment*, he would, at length, find satisfaction in it, and would act habitually from the pure principles of benevolence.

5. The contemplation of virtuous characters is a great means of inspiring the mind with a love of virtue. If a man attentively considers the history of a virtuous person, he cannot help entering into, and approving his sentiments, and he will interest himself in his fate. In short, he will feel himself disposed to act the same part in the same circumstances. It is not equally adviseable to study the lives and contemplate the characters of *vicious* persons, with a view to be deterred from the practice of vice, by means of the horror with which it would inspire us. Because, when the mind is familiarized to any thing, the horror with which we first viewed it, in a great measure, ceases ; and let a man have been ever so wicked, and his schemes ever so detestable, it is hardly possible (if his character and history have been for a long time the principal object of our attention) not to interest ourselves in his affairs, so as to be pleased with the success of his schemes and stratagems. There will be the more danger of this effect, if such a person have any good qualifications to recommend him ; and no man is so far abandoned to vice, as to be entirely destitute of all amiable and engaging qualities.

Vice, joined with wit and humour, or any talent by which a man gives pleasure, or excites admiration, is exceedingly dangerous ; more especially if a person of a profligate character be possessed of any real virtues, particularly such as strike the mind with an idea of *dignity* and *generosity*. Thus courage and humanity too often cover and recommend the most scandalous vices, and even such as really tend to make men cowardly, treacherous and cruel ; and which, at length,

extinguish every spark of generosity and goodness in the heart.

6. In order to cultivate the virtues of piety or devotion to the most advantage, it seems necessary that we frequently meditate upon the works, the attributes, and the character of the Divine Being, and on the benefits which we daily receive from his hands; that we, more especially, reflect upon his universal presence and providence; till every object and every occurrence shall introduce the idea of God, as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, moral Governor and Judge. In this case a regard to him cannot fail habitually to influence our dispositions and conduct, so as to prove the strongest preservative against all vice and wickedness.

7. *Prayer* must be joined to meditation. We must frequently address ourselves to God, expressing our veneration for his character, our gratitude for his favours to us, our humiliation for our offences, our devotedness to his will, our resignation to his providence, and also our *desire* of any thing that he knows to be really good for us. This kind of intercourse with the Deity tends greatly to strengthen every proper disposition of mind towards him. Prayer is the universal dictate of nature, not sophisticated by the refinements of philosophy; and, in fact, has been the practice of all mankind.

Besides, though God be so great and good, though he knows all our wants, and is at all times disposed to grant us every proper blessing; yet he who made us, so as that we cannot help having recourse to him as our Father, Benefactor and Protector, in the same manner as we have recourse to our superiors and benefactors on earth, will no doubt approve, encourage and condescend to that manner of behaviour and address to him, which the same dispositions and circumstances necessarily prompt us to with respect to one another. We may assure ourselves, therefore, that the Divine Being will *realize* our natural conceptions of him, and reward his humble worshippers. Since we cannot rise to him, and conceive of him in a manner that is strictly agreeable to his nature, and since our intercourse with him is necessary to our virtue and happiness, he will certainly condescend to us; so that we may depend upon finding him to be what the best of his creatures hope, and expect concerning him.

It will not, therefore, be the same thing, whether we apply to him for the good things we stand in need of, or not.

Do not the wisest and best of parents act in the same manner towards their children? It has been the source of great error and rash judgment concerning the ways of God, to confine ourselves to the consideration of what God is *in himself*, and not to consider what it even becomes his wisdom and goodness, both to represent himself, and actually to be, with *respect to his imperfect creatures*.

Besides, if *good dispositions* be regarded as the only object and end of prayer, it should be considered, that an address to God for what we want is a *test* of good dispositions, as well as a *means of improving* them, supposing it to be known to be the will of God, that we should pray to him. But it must be acknowledged that, without revelation, or some express intimation of the will of God, in this respect, the reasonableness and obligation of prayer are not so clearly, though sufficiently evident.\*

In fact, there are similar reasons for *asking* favours of God, as for *thanking* him for the favours we have received; since it may be said, that if we be truly grateful, it is quite unnecessary to tell the Divine Being that we are so; and thus all intercourse with God by words must be cut off. But certainly there can be no real impropriety in expressing by words whatever is the *language of the heart*; and it can only be an unreasonable and dangerous refinement to distinguish in this case, between love, gratitude, desire or any other disposition of mind.

\* See "A Letter, to a Friend concerning the End and Design of Prayer, or the Reasonableness of Praying to an unchangeably wise, powerful and good God. In Answer to the Objections of the late Earl of Rochester, Mr. Blount and other modern Deists." Tract II. of "A Collection of Tracts," by Dr. Benson, 4th Ed. 1753. In Dr. Kippis's, "Sermons, on Practical Subjects," 1791, is one on the Duty of Prayer.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF THE FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF MANKIND.

**H**AVING endeavoured to investigate the rules of human duty, from the principles of natural reason, I shall proceed to ascertain, from the same principles, what we have to expect in consequence of our observance, or neglect of them.

The natural rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, in this life, have been already mentioned occasionally. I, therefore, propose, in this section, to consider the evidence with which nature furnishes us, concerning a *future life*, impartially stating both its strength and its weakness.

1. The argument that, in general, has the most weight with the wise and good, in favour of a future life, is the promiscuous and unequal distribution of good and evil in this world, in a *general*, indeed, but by no means an *exact* proportion to the degrees of moral worth, which seems to be inconsistent with the perfect goodness and rectitude of God, as our moral Governor. If, together with his attributes of infinite wisdom and power, he be also a lover of virtue, may it not be expected, it is said, that he will reward it more completely than is generally done in this world, especially in the case of a man sacrificing his life to his integrity, when he evidently cuts himself off from all prospect of any reward, except in a future state? It is acknowledged that in this life we find all the perfection we could wish, considering it as a state of trial and discipline in which to *form virtuous characters*; but in order to complete this scheme, it seems to require another state, to which it may be subservient, and in which the characters that are formed here, may have a suitable employment and reward.

2. There is in the human faculties a capacity for *endless improvement*, in a constant advance from sensual to intellectual pleasures, and these growing more complex and refined *ad infinitum*, provided it was not checked by that change in our constitution, which is at present produced by our approach to old age. Our *comprehension of mind*, likewise, increases with the experience of every day, whereby we

are capable of enjoying more of the past and of the future together with the present, without limits, and whereby our happiness is capable of growing continually more stable and more exalted. In comparison of what we are evidently capable of, our present being is but the infancy of man. Here we acquire no more than the rudiments of knowledge and happiness. And can it be consistent with the wisdom of God, to leave his workmanship so unfinished, as it must be, if a final stop be put to all our improvements at death?

It is true, that we have no faculties but what have some proper exercise in this life, and there is a kind of *redundancy* in all the powers of nature. It is the best provision against a deficiency. Brute creatures, too, have faculties similar to ours, since they differ from us in *degree* more than in *kind*.

But then the difference is so great, especially with respect to some men, and some brutes, and man is so evidently the most distinguished of all the creatures of God upon the face of the earth, that there seems to be foundation enough for our expecting a preference in this respect. Or, if the brute creation should be interested in a future life, we shall certainly have more reason to rejoice in it, than to be offended at it; and many of them seem to have more pain than pleasure in this.\*

We see, indeed, that many things never actually arrive at what we call their *perfect state*. For example, few seeds ever become plants, and few plants live to bear fruit; but still *some* of each species come to maturity, and are whatever their nature is capable of being. Allowing, therefore, that, agreeably to this analogy, very few of mankind should arrive at the proper perfection of their natures, we might imagine that, at least, *some* would; and, therefore, that the wise and the virtuous, if none else, might hope to survive that wreck which would overwhelm the common mass of their species.

It must be acknowledged that, considering only what we know of the constitution of the body and the mind of man, we see no reason to expect that we shall survive death. The faculties and operations of the mind evidently depend upon the state of the body, and particularly, that of the brain. To all appearance, they grow, decay and perish together. But if the goodness, the wisdom and the rectitude of the Divine Being require it, he can easily revive

\* See "An Essay on the Future Life of Brutes, introduced with Observations upon Evil, its Nature and Origin. By Richard Dean, Curate of Middleton." 2d Ed. 1768.

both, or continue the same *consciousness* (which is, in fact, *ourselves*) in some other way.

If we had known nothing of a child but its condition in the womb, we should have pronounced, that its sudden transition into a state so different from it as that which it comes into after birth, would be certain death to it, though, now that we are acquainted with both the states, and can compare them together, we see that the one is preparatory to the other. Equally unfit are we, in this life, to pronounce concerning the real nature of what we call *death*; and when we actually come to live again, we may see an evident, and even a natural connexion betwixt this life and the future, and may then understand the use of death, as a passage from the one to the other; just as we now see the necessity of the birth of a child, in order to its transition to our present mode of existence.

Admitting that death is an entire cessation of thought, similar to a state of *perfectly* sound sleep, or a stupor, yet, if the purposes of God's providence and moral government require it, he can make us to awake from this sleep at any distance of time; and then the interval, let it have been ever so long, will appear as nothing to us. \*

I cannot say that I lay much stress upon the arguments which some have drawn either from the *desire*, or the *belief*

\* Luther while he held "the opinion that souls after death sleep till the resurrection," speaking of "John the Elector of Saxony" who "died of an apoplexy, as soon as he returned from hunting," says, "our good prince expired like an infant without trouble or fear; and when he awakes at the last day, he will imagine that he is just come home from the Forest." Seckendorf. L. 3, p. 30, in Jortin's *Erasmus*, 4to. I. 122. "We may observe that death in the New Testament, is frequently called and compared to a sleep, and that, the most sound and profound; and in such a sleep, viz. a sound sleep, whatsoever time passes over the sleeper's head, he hath no perceivance of, if it be two, ten or twenty hours; the length or shortness of the passing time, doth not at all appear to the sleeper, but at his waking he rises, as if he had but newly fallen asleep. Man's death is such a profound sleep, and his resurrection such a waking. If, during that sleep there go over the dead man's head, months or years to a hundred, or a thousand, this is no way perceivable by the dead person; but when he rises, it will be but as if he had newly fallen asleep.—It would look like a great impropriety to term death a sleep, if it were true that after death, the better part of the man, viz. his soul, continued waking and alive; and at a greater liberty and freedom of action than ever it enjoyed during its conjunction with the body." *A search after Souls*, &c. pp. 184, 185. "Once dead (in my sense) we are not, are no more concerned in time nor the passing of it, but shall rise again, as if we had lain down but the hour before." *Search*, &c. Part II. p. 12. These are two of fifteen Treatises "Printed in the year 1706," *By a Lover of Truth*, in 2 vols. 4to. The Author was Henry Layton, Esq. of Rawden, near Bradford, Yorkshire. See "View of the Controversy concerning an Intermediate State," 2d Edition, p. 182, and Law's *Theory*, 7th Edition, p. 198. Note: Bishop Law says that "Layton's Tracts, contain an answer to all that was wrote in defence of the soul's natural immortality, in that author's time." Mr. Layton like his contemporaries Dr. Coward and Zach. Housel was a Christian *Materialist*. See *Monthly Repository*, VI. 10.

of a future life, among mankind ; because the former is nothing, in fact, but a desire of happiness, and similar to other desires, which, in a thousand respects, we do not see to be gratified ; and other general opinions may perhaps be mentioned, which, nevertheless, are not true.

The general belief and expectation of a future life, is a consideration of importance, but only as a proof of an *early tradition*, which was probably derived from some revelation on that subject, communicated by God to the first parents of mankind.

Upon the whole, I cannot help thinking, that there is something in the arguments above recited, which shews that a future life is very agreeable to the appearances of this, though I do not think them so striking as to have been sufficient, of themselves, to have suggested the first idea of it. And though, if we had never heard of a future life, we might not have expected it, yet now, that we have heard of it, we may be sensible that we should do violence to nature, if we should cease to hope for, and believe it.

Admitting that there is another life, taking place either at death, or at some future period, it must be acknowledged that our condition in it is, at present, in a great measure unknown to us ; but since the principal arguments in favour of it are drawn from the consideration of the moral government of God, we may depend upon it, that virtue will find an adequate reward in it, and vice its proper punishment. But of what *kind*, it is impossible for us to say.

We seem, however, to have sufficient reason to conclude that, since both the happiness and misery of a future life will be proportioned to the degrees of virtue and vice in this, they must both be *finite* ; that is, there must be a continuance of virtue, to secure a continuance of reward, and a continuance in vice to deserve a continuance of punishment.

Although the goodness of God should give a pre-eminence to *virtue* and the rewards of it, in a future state, yet we do not see that even his *justice*, in any sense of the word, can require him to do the same with respect to vice. Indeed, we must give up all our ideas of *proportion between crimes and punishment*, that is, all our ideas of *justice and equity*, if we say that a punishment strictly speaking *infinite*, either in duration or degree, can be incurred by the sin of a *finite creature*, in a *finite time*, especially considering the frailty of human nature, the multiplicity of temptations with which some poor unhappy wretches are beset, and the great disadvantages they labour under through life.

There is, indeed, a sense, and a very alarming one too, in which future punishments, though not strictly speaking infinite, may, nevertheless, be *without end*, and yet be consistent with the perfect rectitude and goodness of God. For the wicked, though confined to a situation which, after some time at least, may not be absolutely, and in itself, painful, may be for ever excluded from a happier situation, to which they see the virtuous advanced. And having this continually in prospect, and knowing that there is an utter impossibility of their ever regaining the rank they have lost by their vices, they may never cease to blame and reproach themselves for their folly, which cannot be recalled, and the effects of which are irreversible. \*

If we argue from the analogy of nature, we shall rather conceive, that, since pain and evils of every kind, are salutary in this life, they will have the same tendency and operation in a future; † and, consequently, that they will be employed to correct, meliorate and reform those who are exposed to them; so that, after a sufficient time of purification, those who are not made virtuous by the sufferings and discipline of this life, will be recovered to virtue and happiness by the long continuance of unspeakably greater sufferings, and of a much *severer discipline* in the life to come.

Since, however, the longer we live in this life, the more *fixed* are our habits and dispositions of mind, so that there

\* See Remarks of Wakefieldensis in The Christian Miscellany, 1792, p. 149.

† This argument from analogy has been carried much further. Jeremiah White, in his *Restoration of all Things*, published in 1712, after the Author's decease, describing "the third scene, the glorious fruit and triumph of the whole finished and perfected in the kingdom of the Father," says, "Sinners of all sorts and sizes shall see all their sufferings, temptations, desertions; but shall be afflicted with them no more—yea, the remembrance of the bitter twinges, and pangs and torments they have suffered for their sins, shall increase their pleasure, and give them the fuller, the sweeter relishes of their present endless ease and deliverance." Pp. 106—8. Thus, too, the writer of *The World Unmasked*, translated from the French, 1736, says, "We may even presume, that boundless goodness will make this transient state of misery an enhancement of happiness; so that men having experienced pain, will be thereby susceptible of a greater degree of bliss, than they could have been, had they not passed through such a state." P. 257.

From this view of the hypothesis "of the final happiness of the wicked," Mr. Wakefield appears to have felt himself almost compelled, for no man could be less inclined to adopt the hypothesis of annihilation, "because," otherwise "the superadded sense of happiness, arising from the experience of past misery, and the comparison of their former and present state will make the condition of the wicked more truly happy than that of the righteous." He yet forbears "to determine peremptorily upon such a momentous doctrine," and concludes that "there can be no hazard, from a speculation that tends to aggrandize the loving-kindness and mercy of our Creator." See Wakefield's St. Matthew, 4to. 1782, p. 361. There is reason to believe that Mr. W. during his latter years became more and more persuaded that the end of the Divine Dispensations towards Man will be an Universal Restoration.

is an astonishing difference between the *flexibility*, as we may call it, of a child, and that of a grown man, our constitution after death may be such, as that any change in the temper of our minds will be brought about with much more difficulty; so that a space of time almost incredible to us at present, may be necessary, in order that the sufferings of a future life may have their proper effect, in reforming a person who dies a slave to vicious habits.

The motives to virtue by no means lose any of their real force from the consideration of the *non-eternity* of *future punishments*, especially upon the supposition that they will be very intense and lasting, though not absolutely *without end*. For, in the first place, what is lost with respect to the motive of *terror* and astonishment, is gained by that of *love*,\* and the persuasion of the greater regard, in the Divine Being, both to justice and mercy, in *not retaining anger for ever*, on account of the finite offences of his imperfect creatures.

Secondly, if the mind of any man be so hardened, as that he will not be influenced by the expectation of a very long continuance of punishment, a thousand years for instance, he will not, in fact, be influenced by the expectation of any suffering at all, even that of eternal and infinite suffering. For, in reality, if the fear of the former do not affect him, and stop his career of vice, it must be owing to his not allowing himself time to think and reflect upon the subject. For no man who really *thinks* and *believes*, can be guilty of such extreme folly, as to purchase a momentary gratification at so disproportioned a price; and if a man do *not think* about the matter, but will follow his appetites and passions without any reflection, all difference, in the intensity or duration of punishment, is wholly lost upon him.

In fact, we see that the bulk of professing Christians, who, if they were asked, would acknowledge their belief of the eternity of hell torments, are by no means effectually deterred from vice by their belief of it. Rather, the vastness of the thing creates a kind of *secret incredulity*. They have a notion that the thing may not, in reality, take place; and, thinking of no medium, they secretly flatter themselves with the hope of meeting with no punishment at all, and consequently indulge the vain hope of going to heaven with a state of mind exceedingly unfit for it, rather than suffer a punishment so vastly disproportioned to the degree of their guilt.

\* See the Earl of Rochester's Conversation with White, in the Preface to the *Restoration*, or in Mon. Repos. VII. 489.

Whereas, if they had been taught to expect only a *just* and *adequate* punishment for all their offences here; and especially such as was necessary to their purification and happiness, their minds might have acquiesced in it, they might have believed it firmly and practically, and such a belief might really have influenced their conduct.

But lastly, it is, perhaps, more agreeable to the analogy of nature (and this guide only I am now following) to expect that, as the greater part of natural productions never arrive at their proper maturity, but perish long before they have attained to it, so the bulk of mankind, who never attain to any high degrees of wisdom or virtue, should finally perish also, and be entirely blotted out of the creation, as unworthy to continue in it; while the few who are wise and virtuous, like full ripe fruits, are reserved for future use.\* And there is something so dreadful in the idea of *annihilation*, as will, perhaps, affect the mind of some persons more than the fear of future torments, with continuance of life, and consequently, with secret hope.

These speculations, it must be owned, are, in a great measure, random and vague, but they are the best, as it appears to me, that we can form to ourselves by the light of nature. What revelation teaches us concerning so difficult but important a subject, we shall see in its proper place.

Such are the conclusions which nature teaches, or rather which she *assents to*, concerning the nature and perfections of God, the rule of human duty, and the future expectations of mankind. I say *assents to*, because, if we examine the actual state of this kind of knowledge, in any part of the world, not enlightened by revelation, we shall find their ideas of God, of virtue and of a future state, to have been very lame and imperfect, as will be shewn more particularly when we consider, in the next part of this course, the *want* and the *evidence* of DIVINE REVELATION.

\* Bishop Butler, who yet does not appear to have rejected the common notion of endless torments, reasons thus in his *Analogy*, P. I. C. v. 4to. 1736, p. 98. Dr. Price follows Butler, with some curious enlargements, and thus satisfies himself with the comparatively merciful doctrine of *annihilation*. See "Dissert. on Providence." Sect. iv. 4th Ed. 1777, pp. 134—152. Dr. Priestley's mature and latest judgment was decidedly favourable to the opinion of Universal Restoration. He thus writes to Mr. Lindsey, in 1803, "The firm faith that you and I have that even the wicked, after a state of wholesome discipline, (and that not more severe than will be necessary) will be raised, in due time, to a state of happiness, greatly diminishes our concern on their account." Mem. of Lindsey, 1812, pp. 537, 538.

# INSTITUTES OF NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

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## PART II.

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CONTAINING  
THE EVIDENCES OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN  
REVELATIONS.

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### THE INTRODUCTION.

IN the first section of this part of the work, I have made great use of a treatise of Dr. Leland's, entitled, *The Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, shewn from the State of Religion in the Ancient Heathen World*; \* and as all the articles I have mentioned are much more largely discussed in that excellent work, where the proper authorities are alleged, I thought it unnecessary to make any particular reference to authors here. If any thing in the account that I have given of ancient or modern unbelievers be controverted, it is that work, and not mine, which must be examined for the purpose.

Upon the subject of *prophecy*, I have also made much use of Bishop Newton's very valuable discourses; and I think it better to make this general acknowledgment, than to refer to these writers, page by page, in the course of my work.

My readers must not forget that I am writing for the use of *young persons*, and, therefore, that I am glad to avail myself of any thing that I can meet with, which I think

proper for their use. I do not recollect; however, that I have, in any other part of this volume, made so much use of any particular writer, as to think it worth while to make any acknowledgment for it; except, perhaps, my borrowing from *Dr. Doddridge's Lectures*, some arguments against the pretended miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus. \*

Let it be observed, also, that writing, as I do, for the instruction of *youth*, though I have not knowingly concealed any *objection*, which, in my own opinion, has the appearance of much weight, I have not thought proper to trouble them with the discussion of every subtile cavil, which has at any time been advanced against revelation in general, or Christianity in particular; because I consider some of them as the effect of such manifest perverseness, as would create difficulties in the clearest cause in the world. I have mentioned so many arguments in favour of revelation, and have replied to so many of the objections to it, that, considering the general plan of my work, I judged it to be altogether superfluous to advance any thing more, whether there be any weight, or no weight at all, in what I have written.

Trite as the subject of this part of my work is, it is far from being exhausted; but, like every other subject of very great importance, it is hardly possible for any person to give much attention to it, without finding, either some new arguments for it, or, at least, setting the old ones in some new and more striking point of light. Some merit of this kind will, perhaps, be allowed to me, especially as far as it respects a commodious *general distribution* of my materials; which I flatter myself will be thought to be easier and more natural, than that of others who have written upon the same subject, and to be calculated to exhibit the evidences of revelation with peculiar strength and clearness.

Fully satisfied as I myself am of the truth of Christianity, and of the sufficiency of the proofs which I have, in this treatise, advanced in favour of it, I am by no means sanguine in my expectations from what I have done, any farther than that it may be of use in the instruction of the *young*, the *ignorant* or the *unsettled*, which was my primary object. No person who knows much of the world can expect that *confirmed unbelievers* will so much as look into it, much less that they will give it a deliberate and impartial perusal. They will presume that they have already thought enough upon the subject, and will not choose to disturb their minds

with any farther discussion of a question which they have long ago decided, or change that course of life into which they were led, and to which they have been accustomed in consequence of it.

I mention this circumstance with no other view than to admonish young persons of the very great care they ought to take in forming their judgments upon a subject of so much importance as this; since, in the course of a few years, the effect of the impression to which their minds must necessarily be subject, will be either a firm and joyful persuasion of the truth of Christianity, a great indifference to it, and neglect of it, or an obstinate and gloomy unbelief. The first of these states of mind I cannot help considering as, in the highest degree, favourable to virtue and happiness, and the last to be, in as great a degree, unfriendly to both. I use the word *gloomy* in speaking of the state of an unbeliever's mind, because I consider my own most cheerful prospects as derived from that faith which he disclaims; and unless I be wholly mistaken with respect to the object of true Christian faith, every defender of it must necessarily have the prejudices of the vicious and profligate against him, and the good-will of all the friends of virtue.

If the Bible contain a true history, we can no longer entertain the least doubt, or be under any uncertainty, concerning the existence, or the moral government of God. We are sure that a Being of infinite power and wisdom is the author of every thing that we behold; that he constantly inspects, and attends to the interest of all his creatures, nothing that he has made being at any time neglected or overlooked by him; and, more especially, that he is influenced by a most intense affection for all his rational offspring; that he is *good and ready to forgive*, and to receive into favour all who sincerely repent of the sins they have committed, and endeavour to conform to his will for the future. If Christianity be true, we can entertain no doubt with respect to a future life, but are absolutely certain that, though we must all die, we shall *all be made alive again*, that Christ will come, by the appointment of God his Father, to judge the quick and the dead, and to give to every man according to his works.

Now the firm belief of these important truths (concerning which there are great doubts and difficulties on the light of nature, but none at all upon the supposition of the truth of Christianity) cannot fail to elevate the sentiments and ennoble the nature of man. It will effectually support us

under all the trials of life, and give us hope and joy in the hour of death. On the other hand, a state of doubt and uncertainty with respect to these articles of faith must make every well-disposed mind (which cannot but most earnestly wish them to be true) anxious and unhappy; and a total disbelief of them must tend to debase the soul, and prepare a man for giving into every kind of vice and excess to which he is strongly tempted. When his views and prospects are narrow and confined, his pursuits will be so too. To adopt a coarse, but just observation, which has been made with respect to this subject, if a man expects to *die* like a dog, it cannot but be supposed that he will also *live* like one.

If, contrary to my expectations, an unbeliever should have the curiosity to look into the following treatise, I would premise to him, that he is to consider it as containing nothing more than my own particular view of the evidences of Christianity; that if he perceives any thing weak or unguarded in what I have advanced, it behoves himself, as well as me, to consider whether the cause in general will not admit of a better defence; that he must look into other defences of Christianity for the supply of any deficiencies which he may find in this; and not think himself justified in his unbelief, till, after an examination of *his own*, an examination truly impartial and earnest, becoming the importance of the subject, he is satisfied, that not *what has passed for Christianity*, but, *what is really so*, is altogether indefensible, having had its source in enthusiasm, or imposture, or both.

Besides the books I have already mentioned in this introduction, or which I have occasionally quoted in the body of the work, I would recommend to those persons who would wish to have more satisfaction with respect to several branches of the evidences of Christianity, the following treatises, several of which are not large or expensive, among many others which may have great merit of the same kind, though I happen not to be so well acquainted with them. *Farmer on Miracles*, 8vo. \* *Price's Dissertations*,

\* "A Dissertation on Miracles, designed to shew that they are Arguments of a Divine Interposition, and absolute Proofs of the Mission and Doctrine of a Prophet," first published by the Author, 1771. That edition having become very scarce, there was a second in 1804, in 12mo. published under the superintendence of the late justly lamented Mr. Joyce, by the Unitarian Society. Mr. Farmer had been anticipated, on this subject, by the writers against supposed *Witchcraft*, in the 16th and 17th centuries, but especially by a French writer who had studied at Geneva. This book, 12mo, has the following title—"Traité sur les Miracles. Dans lequel on prouve

8vo. \* *West on the Resurrection of Christ*, 8vo. † *Lyttelton on the Conversion of St. Paul*, 8vo. *Letters of some Jews to Voltaire*, 2 vols. 8vo. *The Criterion*, 8vo. ‡ *Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, 4 vols. 4to. § and his *History of the Writers of the New Testament*, 3 vols. 8vo. || which may be had separate from his larger work on the *Credibility*. *Butler's Analogy*, 8vo. ¶ *Leland's View of the Deistical Writers*, 2 vols. 8vo. *Jortin's Discourses on the Truth of the Christian Religion*, and his *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, 5 vols. 8vo. *Duchal's Sermons*, 8vo. *Macknight on the Truth of the Gospel History*, 4to. *Doddridge's Three Sermons on the Evidences of Christianity*, especially the second, 12mo. *Sharp's Arguments for the Truth of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. 8vo. *Lowman on the Ritual*, and also on the *Civil Government of the Hebrews*, 2 vols. 8vo., and especially *Hartley's View of the Evidences of Christianity*, in the second volume of his *Observations on Man*.

Several of the above-mentioned writers undertake to

que le Diable n'en sauroit faire pour confirmer l'Erreur; où l'on fait voir, par plusieurs Exemples tirez de l'Histoire Sainte et Profane, que ceux qu'on lui attribue ne sont qu'un effet de l'imposture ou de l'adresse des Hommes; et où l'on examine le Système opposé, tel que l'a établi le Dr. Samuel Clarke, dans le chap. xix. du II. vol. de son *Traité sur la Religion Naturelle et Chrétienne*. Par Jacques Serces, Vicaire d'Appleby, dans le Comté de Lincoln. Amst. Chez Pierre Humbert, 1729." This Author's Theory of Miracles is exactly the same as Mr. F. maintained, and Dr. Clarke is controverted upon the same principles. There is one coincidence rather remarkable. Both writers consider the narrative, in the 18th chapter of Kings, with reference to the assistance which, on the common notion, evil spirits might have afforded to the Priests of Baal. Mr. Serces had said *il ne paroît pas qu'il dût leur être fort difficile—de transporter, d'un endroit voisin de l'Autel, quelque tison allumé*, p. 34. It had not been very difficult for them to have conveyed from some place near the altar a burning brand. Mr. Farmer says, "Why did not evil spirits bring fire in a secret manner from some neighbouring place to the altar? There seems to be no peculiar difficulty in such a miracle." 2d Ed. p. 152. Note.

\* "Four Dissertations, 1. On Providence. 2. On Prayer. 3. On the Reasons for expecting that Virtuous Men shall meet after Death in a State of Happiness. 4. On the Importance of Christianity, the Nature of Historical Evidence, and Miracles." 4th Edition, 1777.

† This Work, by Gilbert West, the translator of Pindar, has been republished by Bishop Watson in his *Theological Tracts*.

‡ "The Criterion; or, Miracles Examined, with a view to expose the Pretensions of Pagans and Papists; to compare the Miraculous Powers recorded in the New Testament, with those said to subsist in latter Times, and to shew the great and material Difference between them in Point of Evidence. From whence it will appear, that the former must be true, and the latter may be false." 1754. The publication was anonymous, but soon attributed to its author, Mr. Douglas, the detector of *Lauder*, who became Bishop of Salisbury, and died in 1807. The *Criterion* had been then lately republished.

§ Contained in the 7th, 8th and 9th volumes of his Works, 8vo. 1788.

|| "The Supplement to the Credibility," forming the 6th volume of Lardner's Works, also republished in Watson's *Theological Tracts*.

¶ "The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature," &c. By Dr. Joseph Butler, afterwards Bishop of Durham. 1st Edition in 4to. 1736. Since frequently republished in 8vo.

defend articles which, in my opinion, do not belong to Christianity, as will be seen in the remainder of this work, as well as in my other writings; and they consequently make the defence of Christianity more difficult than was necessary; but, notwithstanding this, they all contain observations that are well worth the closest attention, in order both to evince the truth of revelation, and to confirm the faith of those who already believe in it.

It ought to be observed upon this subject, that *faith* is not one absolute and determinate thing, but that it admits of *degrees*; proceeding from a simple *assent* to a proposition, which arises from a bare preponderancy of the arguments in favour of it, and advancing by the most insensible gradation, to that *fulness of persuasion*, which arises from the perception of the greatest clearness and strength of the evidence for it. The passions and affections, if they be at all moved by a bare assent, will be extremely languid, though the thing itself be of the greatest moment; whereas a full persuasion of the reality of an interesting object excites the most vigorous and fervent emotions. The difference of the impression they make upon the mind is properly compared to the effect of an object placed at a very great or a very small distance. If any thing in the conduct of life depend upon belief, we shall, in the former case, be hardly influenced by it at all, a very small motive being sufficient to overpower the effect of so superficial a faith; at best, we shall be irresolute and inconstant; whereas in the latter case, we shall be determined to vigorous and immediate action.

It is, therefore, a matter of the greatest consequence, not only that unbelievers be made converts to the Christian faith, but that the faith of believers themselves be strengthened, and they be thereby converted from merely *nominal* into *real* Christians, who live and act under an habitual and lively sense of the great truths of Christianity; and who, in all their enjoyments and pursuits in this world, never lose sight of their relation to another and a better.

Now faith is *increased* by the very same means by which it is first *generated*, viz. by an attention to the proper evidences, and a frequent contemplation of the object of it. Those persons, therefore, who call themselves Christians, and who must be supposed to wish to feel and act as becomes Christians, should study the evidences of their religion; they should meditate upon the life, discourses and miracles of Christ; and make familiar to their minds every thing relating to the history and propagation of Christianity in

the world. They should both frequently read the Scriptures, and also other books which tend to prove their truth and illustrate their contents:

I shall think myself very happy, and that I gain a very valuable end, if this part of my work, though it be of no use to the conversion of unbelievers, should be a means of *confirming the faith* of any professing Christians, leading them to a better understanding of the reasons of their faith, and making them think more frequently and more highly of their privileges and obligations as Christians.

To this part of the work I shall subjoin *An Essay* (published originally in the *Theological Repository* \*) *on the Analogy there is between the Methods by which the Perfection and Happiness of Men are promoted according to the Dispensations of Natural and Revealed Religion.* These, I have there endeavoured to shew, are exceedingly similar, the immediate object in both being a gradual extension of the views, and an enlargement of the comprehension of the human mind. This, however, is a consideration on which I do not lay much stress. It is acknowledged not to be sufficient to produce conviction in the minds of unbelievers, but it is hoped that it exhibits such a *presumptive argument* in favour of the scheme of revelation, as is calculated to give some additional satisfaction to those who are already the lovers and friends of revealed religion; though to persons who have not a philosophical turn of mind, it may seem to be too abstruse, and to have too much refinement in it.

\* Vol. III. p. 3, introduced by a Letter under Dr. P.'s signature *Clemens*, the substance of which forms the conclusion of this Introduction.

## PART II.

THE

**EVIDENCES**

OF

**REVEALED RELIGION.**

WE have seen how far unassisted reason has been able to carry us in our inquiries concerning the being, perfections and providence of God, and also concerning the duty, and final expectations of mankind ; or rather, how far unassisted reason *might* have been able to carry us in these inquiries. For though it be true that all the deductions we have made are derived from the consideration of nothing but what we *feel* or *see*, yet these conclusions were never, in fact, drawn from those premises, by any of the human race ; and it is in vain that we look for so complete a system of morals among the most intelligent of mankind. Indeed, the very imperfect state of this important kind of knowledge in the heathen world, and the growing corruption of morals, which was the consequence of it, furnish a strong proof of the expediency, if not of the absolute necessity of Divine Revelation.



## CHAPTER I.

## OF THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

IT will be acknowledged that, of all the heathen nations, the greatest progress in useful knowledge is to be looked for among the Greeks, who greatly improved upon the stock of knowledge which they borrowed from Egypt and the East. It is, therefore, doing the greatest justice to this subject, to consider the state of knowledge and virtue among these nations.

The Greek philosophers had not failed to give particular attention to the subject of morals and theology, some of the most conspicuous of their sects having had no other object ; and yet, though they had flourished, unmolested, for the space of near six hundred years before the time of

Christ, and had frequently divided and subdivided themselves, (the leaders of every new sect pretending to improve upon all who had gone before them,) none of them attained to any thing like a full conviction concerning the unity, the attributes, and moral government of God. They had very imperfect ideas of the just extent of moral virtue; and the knowledge they had of a future state added little or no strength to its obligations. The practice also of the Gentile world was such as might be expected from the general corruption of their moral and religious principles.

All these particulars are sufficiently known to the learned; and may be known to any person who will take a little pains to acquaint himself with the state of knowledge and virtue in the Gentile world; but as these things are not sufficiently known to the generality of Christians, and the superficial thinkers among us have been greatly misled with respect to this subject, I shall select a few particular facts, which may give those who are attentive and unprejudiced a pretty just idea of what the most enlightened of our species actually were, before the promulgation of Christianity.

## SECTION I.

### *Of the Origin and Corruption of Natural Religion in general.*

PERSONS who begin to think upon these subjects, when they are arrived to years of maturity, and who find in themselves a full persuasion concerning the great truths of natural religion, concerning the Being of God, the unity of his nature, and his moral character and government; as also concerning the rule of human duty and the doctrine of a future state, do not sufficiently consider how they came by that knowledge; and thinking the whole system to be very rational and natural, they are apt to conclude that it must therefore have been very *obvious*, and that all the particulars of it could not but have been known to all mankind.

But, in fact, there is no man living whose knowledge of these subjects was not derived from instruction, and the information of others; and therefore there is no man living who, from his own sense of things and experience, can be deemed a competent judge of what the powers of his own nature are able to do in this case. For the solution of this important question, we must have recourse to history only, and see what mankind have *in fact* attained to in a variety of circumstances.

Now it appears, by the most careful investigation, that all the useful and practical knowledge of religion, of which we find any traces among the Eastern nations and the Greeks, was, by their own confession, derived to them from their ancestors, in more early ages. Among the Greeks it was more particularly acknowledged, that their wisdom and religion came from the Barbarians, and especially those who were from the East, many of whom arrived in Greece by the way of Thrace. It is well known to have been a long time before men pretended to *reason* at all upon subjects of morals or religion. The celebrated *wisdom of the East*, and also that of the earliest Greek philosophers, consisted in nothing else than in delivering the *traditions of the ancients*.

It is another remarkable fact, that it is in the earliest ages of the heathen world, that we are to look for the purest notions of religion among them; and that, as we descend into the lower ages, we find religion growing more and more corrupt, even among the most intelligent of the Heathens, who arrived at great refinements of taste, and made considerable improvements in science. This was the case universally till the promulgation of Christianity in the world.

History informs us that the worship of one God, without images, was in all nations prior to polytheism. Varro says, expressly, that the Romans worshipped God without images for one hundred and seventy years.\* This was also the case with all the nations of the East, with the Greeks, and even throughout this Western part of the world. We also find that the belief of future rewards and punishments was never

\* Varro, who flourished nearly a century before the birth of Christ, appears to have had no idea of "the worship of one God," for in the following passage from *Leland*, on the authority of *Augustine*, he speaks only of polytheism, though he must have grossly misapprehended the religion of the Jews. "It is particularly observed by Varro, concerning the ancient Romans, that they worshipped the gods without an image for more than 170 years. And he adds, that if this had still continued the gods would have been worshipped more purely. *Quod si adhuc mansisset, castius dii observentur*: of which he mentions the Jews as an example. Yea, he sticks not to declare that they who first instituted images of the gods for the people, both took away from the cities the reverence of the gods, and added to the popular error. *Qui primi simulacra Deorum populis posuerunt, eos civitatibus suis et metum demissis, et errorem addidisse.*" Apud Augustin de Civ. Dei. Lib. iv. cap. 31, p. 87. *Leland* C. R. I. 423. Plutarch, who wrote, after the Christian era, and to whom also *Leland* refers, says, that "Numa forbade the Romans to represent the Deity in the form either of man or beast. Nor was there among them formerly any image or statue of the Divine Being. During the first 170 years, they built temples, indeed, and other sacred domes, but placed in them no figure of any kind; persuaded that it is impious to represent things Divine by what is perishable, and that we can have no conception of God but by the understanding." *Langhorne's Plutarch*. 3rd Edition, 1778, I. 162.

questioned among the Greeks, till they began to reason upon the subject; when, rejecting the old traditions, and not finding satisfactory evidence of any other kind, they came at length to disbelieve them. This scepticism and infidelity was introduced by the philosophers, and was from them diffused through all ranks of men, both in Greece and Rome.

These remarkable facts certainly favour the supposition, that the most important doctrines of natural religion were communicated by Divine revelation to the first parents of mankind.\*

We even find the most acute of modern unbelievers acknowledging the improbability that the doctrine of the Divine Unity, and others above-mentioned, should naturally have been the first religion of mankind. Bolingbroke says that polytheism and idolatry have so close a connexion with the ideas and affections of rude and ignorant men, that one of them could not fail to be their first religious principle, and the other their first religious practice; † and Mr. Hume, after discussing the matter very minutely, acknowledges, that the doctrine of one God is not naturally the religion of mankind. ‡

The view of this writer is to make it probable that the rudiments of religious knowledge were acquired by mankind in the same manner as the rudiments of other kinds of knowledge, and that similar advances were made in both; but the testimony of history is uniformly and clearly against him. Indeed it cannot, surely, be supposed that, according to his principles, the Divine Being should leave mankind under a necessity of forming either no religion at all, or a false and dangerous one.

Is it not, therefore, more agreeable to our ideas of the wisdom and goodness of God, to suppose that, at the same time

\* See "The Knowledge of Divine Things, from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature." By the late Dr. John Ellis, Vicar of St. Catherine's, Dublin. 2nd Edition, 1771, Ch. 2nd. Pp. 106, &c. Dr. E. maintains "that the first language was taught by God," and that thus was communicated by tradition that Divine knowledge which has been since improperly described as *Natural Religion*. There is a large "Account of Dr. Ellis's Work," with Remarks, in *Miscellaneous Philosophical, &c.* 1780. No. VI. written by Mr. T. Christie, a Merchant of London, who died at Surinam, and of whom there are some notices in *Mon. Repos.* VI. 585. Dr. Winder in his "*History of Knowledge—chiefly Religious*," ascertains how, what is called *Natural Religion*, might have been a Revelation conveyed, though corrupted, by Tradition.

† See Bolingbroke's Works, 4to. III. 253, 259, 260, in Leland. C. R. I. 50.

‡ See Hume's Dissertation on the Natural History of Religion, pp. 5, 6, quoted in Leland. C. R. I. 48.

that he instructed the first parents of mankind how to provide for their subsistence in the world, and imparted to them that knowledge which was necessary for the purpose (without which they must soon have perished) and when he taught them the rudiments of speech (without which, notwithstanding their superior capacities, they would have been little superior to brute animals, perhaps, for several centuries), he gave them to understand the more important particulars concerning their relation to himself, as their Creator, Preserver and final Judge; and that he instructed them in those acts of religious worship which correspond to these relations; and also that he enjoined them the observance of the most important rules of social duty, and the proper government of themselves in other respects? \* All the knowledge we have of history agrees with this supposition, and the thing is far from being improbable, or absurd in itself.

When this primitive religion of mankind became corrupted, there seems to have been no probability that it would ever have been restored to its original purity by natural means. Rather, the continued operation of the same causes might be expected to render it more and more depraved. The only probable resource was the knowledge of the studious and the learned. But the knowledge of the Greek philosophers was confined to their professed disciples, few of them taking any pains to enlighten the minds of the bulk of the people. Indeed, they generally held the common people in great contempt, considering them as incapable of being benefited by their instructions. And, on the other hand, the bulk of the people either despised the philosophers, or thought themselves unconcerned in any thing that passed within their schools. All that they minded were the religious rites of their country, as directed by their priests; and the philosophers themselves were so far from attempting any reformation of the prevailing idolatry (though it often countenanced the most abominable vices), that they both conformed to it themselves, and enforced conformity to it in others, even as a duty of moral obligation.

At length, however, more and more of the common people began to listen to the philosophers, and then all the remains of the old and useful traditions, of the world being made by God, and that men would be called to an account for their conduct in this world, when they should live in

\* See Note, p. 75.

another, were given up. For the great object of the Greek philosophers was to exclude the interposition of the Deity both in the formation of the world and every thing else, supposing it to have been formed either by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, or in some other necessary and mechanical way ; and the boasted end of many of their sects was to deliver the minds of men from the fear of the gods, and the terrors of a world to come.

It must be observed, that there is a striking difference between the moral writings of those philosophers who wrote before, and those who wrote after, the promulgation of Christianity. The latter lean much more to what has been shewn to have been the primitive religion of mankind, and they inculcate purer morals. This, though they do not acknowledge it, was, no doubt, the effect of Christianity, with the maxims of which, and the happy influence of them, the philosophers must have been acquainted. In various other respects, also, the moral state of the heathen world was much improved by Christianity. Eusebius enumerates many absurd and vicious customs, which, having prevailed before the promulgation of it, grew into disuse afterwards. The philosophers, however, notwithstanding the improvement of their moral system, were the greatest opposers of Christianity, and the strongest bulwark of idolatry ; and when the glaring absurdities of the popular worship were exposed by Christian writers, they invented plausible apologies for it.

That I may impress the minds of those who are not much read in ancient history with a just sense of the value of revelation, I shall point out the several steps by which the primitive religion of mankind became corrupted, and give some idea of the consequence of that corruption with respect to the morals of the people ; and that such persons may be more fully satisfied how much we are, in fact, indebted to revelation, even where natural reason has had the freest scope, I shall, at the same time, shew how very nearly the sentiments of the most celebrated modern unbelievers, who had an opportunity of knowing and selecting whatever they approved from revelation, tally with those of the heathen philosophers, who never heard of it, with respect to the important doctrines of the unity, the moral character and government of God, the rule of human duty, and the expectation of a state of retribution after death.

## SECTION II.

*Of the Corruption of THEOLOGY in particular.*

THE primary and great cause of idolatry was, low and unworthy notions of God, from whence men were led to consider all that we ascribe to God as too much for *one being*, what no one being could have made, or could properly attend to afterwards. They also thought it beneath the Supreme Being to concern himself with the government of the inferior parts of the creation. They, therefore, imagined that he had *deputies* to act under him; and the first objects to which they ascribed this delegated power, were the sun, moon and stars, which, on account of their splendour and beneficial influence, they supposed to be either animated themselves, or directed by intelligent beings. That the worship of the stars, and other heavenly bodies, was the earliest species of idolatry, is agreeable to all ancient history.\*

The temptation to this kind of idolatry appears, from the book of Job,† to have been very strong, in the earlier ages of the world; and it is evident, from several circumstances, that it had a very firm hold on the minds of men. It was for affirming the stars to be inanimate bodies, which was considered as denying their divinity, and for advancing that the sun is a body of fire, and that the moon is a habitable world, that Anaxagoras was accused at Athens for *impiety*. Even Socrates thought him guilty of great presumption and arrogance; and Plato speaks of his opinion as leading to atheism, and a denial of Divine Providence. This worship of the stars is what he himself chiefly recommended to the people.‡

Next to the worship of the sun, moon and stars, succeeded that of *dead men*. This arose from customs which were originally intended to express no more than a just regard for their merit and services; but from this they proceeded, gradually, to acts of worship properly religious, erecting altars to them, and praying to them in any place and at any time. This introduced the worship of images in human

\* See Lord Herbert on "The Ancient Religion of the Gentiles." Ch. iv—viii. Young, "On Idolatrous Corruptions." I. 24—36. Leland: C. R. I. 88—94.

† Ch. xxxi. 26, 27. See Deut. iv. 19.

‡ See Young on Idol. Cor. I. 110. This writer had seen, "upon a gold coin of Augustus's, a person praying to the sun; the legend, *Providentiæ Deorum*." See, also, Leland. C. R. I. 93.

forms, whereas they had before contented themselves with erecting pillars, or even consecrating rude stones and altars to their deities. The philosophers were far from discouraging this practice of worshipping dead heroes. Cicero, in particular, much approves of the custom of paying divine honours to famous men, and regarding them as gods.\*

During this progress of idolatry, the worship of the true God was gradually superseded, and the rites of it became intermixed with those of the inferior deities. What contributed to confound these things the more was, that to most of the heavenly bodies, and also to deified men, were ascribed the names and attributes of the one true God, till the rites peculiar to each of them could be no longer distinguished; and at length the worship of inferior beings engrossed all the regards of mankind, the worship of the true God being entirely excluded.

Besides the worship of the celestial gods, and of dead men, we also find gods of an intermediate nature, such as are now usually called *genii*. Of these there were supposed to be various classes, and the worship that was paid to them made a considerable article in the heathen system.†

As if these three sources could not supply divinities enough, we find that even different *names* of the same god, and acknowledged to be the same, were made to pass for different deities, and had their peculiar religious rites and worship. Similar to this are the Virgin Marys of different places in Popish countries. It was another source of the multiplicity of heathen gods, that the *symbols and images* of their principal gods were converted into deities, and made the objects of religious worship, as fire among the Chaldeans, and the bull, and other animals, among the Egyptians.

There can be no doubt, but that the images erected to their

\* De Nat. Deor. L. ii. Cap. 94. in Leland. C. R. I. 102. See Young, l. 73—77, and "The General Prevalence of the Worship of Human Spirits in the ancient Heathen Nations asserted and proved by Hugh Farmer." 1792. *Passim*. Sir W. Jones remarks, that "historical or natural truth has been perverted into fable by ignorance, imagination, flattery or stupidity; as a king of Crete, whose tomb had been discovered in that island, was conceived to have been the god of *Olympus*; and Minos, a legislator of that country, to have been his son, and to hold a supreme appellate jurisdiction over departed souls." He adds, "The less we say of *Julian* stars, deifications of princes or warriors, altars raised, with those of Apollo, to the basest of men, and divine titles bestowed on such wretches as Caius Octavianus, the less we shall expose the infamy of grave senators and fine poets, or the brutal folly of the low multitude: but we may be assured, that the mad *apotheosis* of truly great men, or of little men falsely called great, has been the origin of gross idolatrous errors in every part of the pagan world." *On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India*. Disserth. l. 2, 3.

† See Plut. On the Consistency of Oracles. *Moralis*, IV. 12, &c. Lord Herbert. Ch. xii. Article *Genius*. Plut. in *Romulus*, ad fin. Longhorne. l. 86, 87.

gods were generally supposed to have divine powers in them. The philosopher Stilpo, of Megara, was banished by the Areopagus at Athens for asserting that the statue of Minerva, made by Phidias, was not a god; and all that he ventured to allege in his defence was, that this celebrated piece of statuary was not a *god*, but a *goddess*.\*

Farther, all the *parts of the universe* being considered as so many parts of the divinity by some, or expressions of his power by others, were made objects of religious worship. Even the qualities and *affections* of mankind, and also the *accidents* to which they are exposed, were worshipped, as if a separate intelligence had presided over each of them; and some of these were not only natural evils, but even things of a morally vicious nature. Thus there was at Rome an altar to the *Fever*, another to *Evil Fortune*, and others to *Lust* and *Pleasure*. At Athens there was a religious service appropriated to *Impudence*, and it was done by the advice of *Epimenides*, who passed for a great diviner and a prophet.†

We find, in fact, that deities of a bad character engrossed more of the attention of the heathen world, in general, than those of which they entertained a good opinion, these being thought to be of themselves disposed to do them kind offices. Even Plutarch cites with approbation the opinion of Xenocrates, who, speaking of unlucky days‡ and festivals, which were celebrated by scourging, beatings, lamentations, fastings, ill-boding words and obscene expressions, said that these things could not be pleasing to the good demons, but that there are in the air about us certain great and powerful natures, of cross and morose tempers, which take pleasure in these things, and, having obtained them, do no farther mischief.

The Egyptians paid divine honours not only to the useful animals, as the Ibis and Ichneumon, but also to the Crocodile, and other noxious animals. Worshipping some of these gods from love, and others from fear, we are not surprised to find that the same gods which they worshipped in some of their religious festivals, were the constant objects of their curses and execrations in others.§

\* Laert. L. ii. Segm. 116. in Leland. C. R. I. 131.

† Cicero de Nat. Deor. L. iii. Ch. 25, ii. 23. On Laws. Ch. xi. in Leland. C. R. I. 134, 135. See Lord Herbert. Ch. 12, ad fin. Art. *Fortune*.

‡ See Young. II. 131—134.

§ Diod. Sic. L. i. Ch. 84. in Leland. C. R. I. 143; 144. See Goguet. "Origin of Laws, Arts and Sciences," B. vi. I. 358, translated from the French. This author considers the Egyptians as unjustly charged with the worship of *vegetables*, on the comparatively late authority of *Juvenal* and *Lucian*.

Such were the gods whom we find to have been the objects of religious worship among the most celebrated heathen nations ; and, from the idea which has been given of their characters, we may easily imagine what kind of attention they were supposed to give to human affairs ; but the doctrine of a *providence*, without which the belief of a God can have no influence, was, on other accounts, exceedingly imperfect and confused among the heathens. It was, more especially, not a little embarrassed with their notions of the influence of *fate* and *fortune* on human affairs. They even imagined that there was a fate which was uncontrollable by the greatest of their gods ; and *Fortune* they considered as a deity altogether blind and capricious, so that no kind of conduct could recommend them to her favourable notice more than another.\* Besides, the providence of the greatest of their gods was hardly supposed to extend any farther than to the outward conveniences of life. They therefore prayed to them for life, health, riches, or power, but seldom or never for wisdom, or any moral endowment.

This, it will be said, was the religion of the *vulgar* ; but the same was the religion which the philosophers conformed to, and enjoined. They even laid great stress upon the strict observance of it, and made it a matter of moral obligation. Indeed, their own real sentiments were not much more favourable to virtue. The learned Varro seems to value himself as having deserved well of his fellow-citizens, because he had not only given an account of the gods which the Romans ought to worship, but of the powers and offices belonging to each of them, that the people might not be at a loss whom to address on any particular occasion. Socrates, the Stoics and the best of the philosophers generally speak of *the gods* in the plural number, and seldom or never distinguish any one being as supreme with respect to the rest. Plato, indeed, in one passage of his works, speaks of one supreme God, but as a thing that was not fit to be communicated to the vulgar ; and in general he also speaks of *the gods* in the plural number. Plutarch, who lived in the times of Christianity, acknowledges, indeed, one supreme Being ;† but he also admits of a co-eternal evil principle.

The generality of the philosophers held the whole animated system of the world, or at least the soul of it (of which every separate intelligence was a part), to be God.

\* Plutarch, Plato, Maximus Tyrius in Leland, C. R. I. pp. 364—366.

† See Note, p. 74.

Balbus, among a number of excellent things in proof of the being of a God (in that celebrated treatise of Cicero concerning *the nature of the gods*), maintains that the world is an animal, and has intelligence; that it is reasonable, wise and happy, and therefore a God. The great argument of the Stoics for the unity of God is, that there is but one world. In later times some of the philosophers endeavoured to turn the popular religion into allegory, pretending that Jupiter, for instance, meant the air, and Juno the earth, &c.\*

Many of the philosophers denied that there is any providence of the gods at all. Pliny, the great naturalist, represents it as ridiculous to imagine that the God who is supreme gives any attention to the affairs of men; and many were of opinion that the gods attend to the greater events of the world only. Indeed, it was the object of many of the sects of philosophy, and particularly of the Epicureans, who were very numerous about the time of Christ, and especially in the higher ranks of life, to exclude the interposition of God both in making and governing the world.†

Of what advantage can such a religion as this, the outlines of which I have been describing, be supposed to have been to the interest of virtue and good morals? Indeed, *religion* and *morals* were never considered by the heathens as having any proper connexion at all. It was never supposed to be any part of the business of a priest to teach the people virtue, their office being confined to the due performance of religious rites and ceremonies. When the gods were supposed to be offended, and public calamities were considered as tokens of the Divine displeasure, they never had recourse to repentance and reformation as a means of averting their anger, but always to some more exact or more expensive ceremony. The usual method of making an atonement at Rome, was a solemn procession, and driving a nail into the temple of Jupiter.‡ Lord Herbert acknowledges, that all the religion of the Gentiles was sunk into mere superstition.§

Every thing that the common people had any opportunity of hearing or seeing belonging to religion, among the Greeks

\* Cudworth, Intel. Syst. pp. 343, 344, 533. Varro apud Aug. de Civ. Dei, L. vii. C. 9, p. 131. Præpar. Evangel. L. xv. C. 15, p. 817. Laert. in Zen. L. vii. S. 138, 159. Cicero De Nat. Deor. L. 1. C. 14. L. ii. C. 8 & C. 13, &c. Acad. L. ii. C. 41, in Leland, C. R. I. pp. 288—292.

† Plin. Hist. Nat. L. ii. C. 7. See Leland, C. R. I. pp. 354—357.

‡ To perform this ceremony, a Dictator was appointed. See Livy, L. 7, C. 3.

§ "By their own histories, I found their gods were often not only mere men, but also some of the most vile and —, that their religious worship, rites and ceremonies were ridiculous and extravagant." Rel. Gent. C. i. p. 2.

or Romans, instead of inspiring good sentiments, and leading to regularity of conduct, generally tended to inflame their passions, and furnished excuses for the undue gratification of them. Public games and plays, in which the flagitious actions of the gods were represented, were considered as acts of religion, encouraged by their deities, and celebrated in honour of them; and several circumstances lead us to think that they had a very immoral tendency. In Terence we find a young man encouraging himself in an act of lewdness by the example of Jupiter,\* and the Cretans apologized for their addictedness to the love of boys by the example of the same god and Ganymede.

Indeed, it was hardly possible to attend upon, and especially to assist in, the festivals of some of the heathen gods, without committing actual wickedness, and contracting the very worst of habits. Bacchus was worshipped with the most indecent revelling and drunkenness, and the greatest philosophers never remonstrated against such practices. It was a saying of Plato, that to drink to excess was not allowable, except upon the festival of that god who is the giver of wine. The licentiousness of such religious rites as these was so notorious, that it was not thought safe for married women to go to the feast of Bacchus, Ceres, or Cybele. Hence a saying of Aristippus, concerning a remarkably chaste woman, that she could not be corrupted even at the Bacchanals.†

In the *Ludi Florales* at Rome, the chief part of the solemnity was managed by a set of shameless prostitutes, who ran up and down naked, dancing in lascivious postures; and this custom was not discountenanced, but encouraged, by the gravest magistrates.‡ Strabo relates, that there was at Corinth a temple of Venus, so rich, that it maintained above a thousand prostitutes, dedicated to the service of the goddess.§ Herodotus and the most credible historians assure us, that, by a law of the Babylonians, every woman, a native of the country, was obliged to receive the embraces of the first stranger that offered himself in the precincts of some of their temples, before she could be married. There were customs similar to this in many other parts of the East.|| Even sodomy and bestiality were openly practised

\* See a reference to the story of *Danaë*. *Eunuchus*, Act. iii. Sc. xi. l. 42, 43.

† Diog. Laert. L. iii. S. 39. Pyrrhon. Hypotyp. L. iii. C. 24. in Leland, C. R. I. pp. 172, 173.

‡ Particularly *Porcius Cato*, according to Valer. Max. L. ii. C. 5. See Kennet's *Antiquities of Rome*, P. ii. B. v. Ch. vii. 8th Ed. p. 296.

§ Strabo, L. viii. p. 581. Ed. 1707, in Leland, C. R. I. p. 174.

|| Strabo, L. xii. p. 837. Herod. L. i. n. 199. Ed. 1608, in Leland, C. R. I. p. 174

in some of their temples, and the figures of the parts of generation, carved in wood, were carried about in many of their processions, and had divine honours paid to them.\*

The mischiefs of this religion were not confined to the encouragement of the softer vices. It even authorized the most horrible *cruelties*, so that the religious rites of the heathens were shocking to humanity. In some of the festivals of Bacchus, the priests used to tear and devour the entrails of goats, raw and reeking, in imitation of their god. The priests of Cybele castrated themselves, and in their procession made the most hideous noises and howling, cutting themselves till the blood gushed out, as they went along. The priests of Baal, also, were wont to cut and slash themselves in the same manner.† At Sparta, boys were often whipped in honour of Diana till they died, in which case they were honoured with a public and splendid funeral; and, in some towns of Arcadia, women were whipped with the same severity.‡

Human sacrifices prevailed all over the heathen world, and in no country were they more common than among our ancestors the ancient Britons.

On some occasions the Britons were used to construct large images of wicker work, which they filled with living men, and especially prisoners taken in war; and, setting fire to it, they put to death, in this most cruel manner, all the unhappy wretches it contained. In other respects, also, the religion of the Britons was no better, but worse, and more barbarous, than that of the Greeks and Romans. The whole country was held in a state of the most slavish subjection to their priests, the Druids,§ who had a power of excluding persons from the privilege of attending their sacred rites; after which excommunication, the person who had incurred it was cut off from all human intercourse, and every advantage of civil society. The exercise of this horrid religion was, by Augustus, prohibited in Gaul, under pain of death. The Britons were not at that time subject to the Romans.

Both the Peruvians and the Mexicans used human victims; and the latter are said to have sacrificed, at one particular time only, five thousand prisoners of war.

\* See Leland, C. R. I. pp. 175, 176. Potter's Antiquities of Greece, 1775, 9th Ed. I. p. 383.

† See 1 Kings xviii. 28.

‡ See Leland, C. R. I. p. 172. Potter's Antiq. I. p. 380.

§ "—reported, men factious and ambitious—nor restrained they the people under them from a lewd, adulterous and incestuous life—but the Gospel, not long after preached here, abolished such impurities." Milton's History of England, B. ii. p. 60.

Human sacrifices were even used in the Roman empire, as Porphyry, a heathen writer, informs us, till the time of the Emperor Adrian, who ordered them in most places to be abolished ; but this was after the promulgation of Christianity. The same writer says, that in his own times, and in the city of Rome itself, it was the custom to sacrifice a man at the feast of Jupiter Latiaris ; and Lactantius, a Christian writer, says, that the same thing was done in his time.

These human sacrifices were thought to be, of all others, the most acceptable offerings to their gods, being the strongest proof they could give of their devotedness to them ; and so far were public calamities from leading them to renounce this horrid custom, that they were always a means of confirming them in it. It had grown into a custom at Carthage to sacrifice not *freemen*, as they had done originally, but only *slaves*, or prisoners taken in war, at the feast of Saturn ; but, after a war in which they were great sufferers, they concluded that their losses were owing to the displeasure of the gods, on account of their ignoble offerings, and immediately they sacrificed three hundred youths of the best families in Carthage.

Among other detestable methods of divination, one was the murder of infants, and others, who were sacrificed on purpose, that, by raking into their entrails, they might gain an insight into futurity, as appears from the testimony of Herodotus, Cicero, Lucan, Juvenal, Tacitus, Philostratus, Porphyry and many other learned Pagans, as well as from the intimations of the sacred writers.

When the blood of young children was made use of, it was not deemed sufficient in some cases merely to put them to death, for it was imagined to be necessary for their purpose that their death should be lingering and painful.

The Cimbri ripped open the bowels of human victims, and from them formed a judgment concerning future events ; and the Celtæ divined by the agonies and convulsions of men offered in sacrifice, and from the effusion of their blood.\*

All heathen nations, when they wanted to pry into futurity, or to engage the assistance of their gods in any enterprise, at the best, had recourse to the most absurd methods of learning their will ; as by observing the appearance of the entrails of beasts offered in sacrifice, the flight of birds, or the ravings of men and women, who had the art of throwing themselves into convulsions, and pretending to

\* On Human Sacrifices, see Leland and his Authorities, C. R. I. pp. 167—170. Also Bishop Porteus's "Beneficial Effects of Christianity," &c. 1806, pp. 57—61.

be inspired. The solemn *auspices* of the Romans consisted in observing the manner in which chickens pecked their food, and to this every Roman general was obliged to give the closest attention every morning.\* A thousand things of this nature might be enumerated, every heathen nation abounding with them; and there are many remains of them in all countries of the world, the nations of Christendom and this country by no means excepted. All these methods of consulting the gods could rise from nothing but the lowest and the most absurd notions of the Divine Power and Providence.

It will be said that philosophy must certainly have been some check upon these enormities; but, strange as it may seem, this does not appear to have been the case. Human sacrifices, indeed, became less frequent, and were, in a manner, abolished both in Greece and Rome; but this does not seem to have been owing to the philosophy, but to the greater humanity of later times. The philosophers were so far from attempting the reformation of any religious rite, however abominable, that they are known to have encouraged the most absurd of all their superstitions, and to have connived, at least, at the most scandalous of them. Socrates, and their best moralists, strongly recommend even the divinations and oracles of their times;† and when Aristotle expresses his disapprobation of obscene pictures, he excepts those of the gods, which religion has sanctified.

If we consider the real sentiments of the philosophers, abstracted from any relation to the people, or connexion with civil government, they will be found by no means to furnish a sufficient foundation for a spirit of just and useful devotion, consisting of the sentiments of reverence and love to God, confidence in his providence, and a regard to virtue from his authority. Those who are thought to have had the most sublime notions concerning the Deity, after the times of Christianity, seem to have been against all external worship of the Supreme God. Cicero, in all his treatises concerning *human duty*, never draws any argument to enforce the practice of it from the authority or command of God. ‡

\* See Potter's Antiq. B. ii. Ch. xiv. xv. I. pp. 314—328. Kennet, R. A. B. ii. Ch. iii. & iv. pp. 67—72. Reland conjectures that the cock-crowing said to have been heard by Peter, on his denial of Christ, was occasioned by one of the chickens kept in the Roman garrison for the military purposes of *augury*. See "H. Relandi Disertatio de Galli canto Hierosolymis audito." Edit. Quarta, 1724, p. 24.

† Xen. Mem. Socrat. L. i. C. i. S. 2, 3. L. iv. C. iii. S. 16. C. vii. S. 10, in Leland, C. R. I. pp. 320, 321.

‡ See De Offic. L. i. C. ult. xi. C. 3, "It is a just observation of Mr. Locke,

Maximus Tyrius has a whole dissertation \* to prove that we ought not to pray at all, and Seneca represents it as altogether needless to apply to God by prayer. *Make thyself happy*, says he. But the language of the Stoics was not uniform or consistent on this, or on several other subjects. Notwithstanding they speak much of God, or the Gods, they never mention repentance and confession of sin, as any part of our duty.

If the heathen philosophers had been impressed with a proper reverence for God, they could never have indulged themselves in the indecent practice of *common swearing*, which they seem to have done without the least restraint. The Dialogues of Plato, in which Socrates is always a speaker, are full of oaths; and so are the works of Marcus Antoninus.

It will be said that such a religion, and such philosophy, were the produce of an early age; and that it may be presumed that, in time, men would have formed juster notions of the attributes and moral government of God, have attained to a practical and steady dependence upon him, and have expressed their devotional sentiments by proper acts of homage. But we shall be obliged to give up this flattering idea, when we consider what has been advanced upon these subjects by philosophers of a more enlightened age, who have abandoned revelation, and have pretended, at least, to be guided by nature only.

Mr. Hobbes says, that whatever is incorporeal is nothing at all, † and he makes religion a business of the State only. ‡ Mr. Hume subverts the very foundation of all our reasoning from effects to causes, so that from what we see around us, we cannot with certainty infer an intelligent author. § Mr. Blount, the author of a celebrated treatise called *The Oracles of Reason*, || represents “ the opinion of the origin of good

that ‘ the philosophers who spoke from reason, made not much mention of the Deity in their Ethics.’” Reas. of Christ. Leland, II. p. 118.

\* “ Translated from the Greek,” with “ Remarks,” by Dr. Benson, in his “ Collection of Tracts,” Nos. IV. and V. 8vo. 4th Ed. 1753.

† Leviathan, pp. 214, 371, in Leland, *Deistical Writers*. Let. iii. 2d Ed. I. p. 60.

‡ Question concerning Liberty, p. 196. De Cive. C. xvii. Leviath. pp. 169, 283, 284, in Leland, D. W. I. p. 59. See the Strictures on *Hobbes*, in the *Cyropædia*, “ by the late Hon. Maurice Ashley,” 2d Ed. 1729, Pref. pp. 11 and 21.

§ “ When we look about us, towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able in a *single* instance, to discover any power, or necessary connexion; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other.” Phil. Essays, 2d Ed. 1750, Es. vii. p. 103. See other passages of the Essays quoted and examined by Leland, D. W. II. pp. 1—9.

|| A Collection of Letters and small Tracts, first published in 1693, with a Preface, by Mr. Gildon. See Biog. Brit. II. p. 385. Note [o].

and evil from two different eternal principles, the one good and the other evil, as not unreasonable ;” and he makes objections to the duty of prayer. \* Mr. Chubb expressly denies the doctrine of a particular providence, and not only speaks of the impropriety of praying to God, but even suggests a suspicion that it may be displeasing to the Divine Being.

Bolingbroke, who has been much extolled as a writer and philosopher, blames even the Pagan theists for flattering human nature, when they taught that a good man imitates God. † He will admit of no proof that God is a lover of mankind, and made man to be happy. ‡ He altogether rejects the Scripture doctrine of a particular Providence, and the notion that God is attentive to the prayers and wants of men. § He acknowledges that God is a Being of almighty power and infinite wisdom ; but he says, that we must not pretend to ascribe to him any *moral* attributes, as holiness, justice or goodness. He says that he neither has these qualities, nor any thing equivalent to them. ||

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Moral Sentiments of the Heathens.*

HAVING taken a view of the state of theology in the Gentile world, I shall proceed to consider some of their general maxims relating to *morals*, and especially such as were patronized by the philosophers ; and we cannot but be sensible that they were by no means favourable to virtue, taken in its just extent. At the close of this I shall also shew how modern unbelievers have relapsed into the same loose kind of morality.

Many of the philosophers maintained that there is nothing just or unjust by nature, but only by positive law and custom. This was the opinion of Theodorus, Archelaus and Aristippus, of the Alexandrian school, which prevailed the most, a little before the time of Christ. All the earlier philosophers allowed too much to the obligation of positive law. Even Socrates himself represents it as essential to the character of a good man to obey, without reserve, the laws

\* Leland, D. W. Let. iv. p. 73. Yet it would be no easy task to prove any belief more reasonable, *exclusive of Revelation*, than the doctrine of *Two Principles*.

† Bolingbroke's Works, 4to. V. 62, &c. in Leland, D. W. II. pp. 170, 171.

‡ Id. V. pp. 345, 392, 421, in Leland, p. 191.

§ Id. V. p. 431, in Leland, p. 206.

|| Id. V. p. 87, &c. in Leland, p. 192.

of his country. \* On the other hand, Epicurus taught that a man is to do every thing for his own sake, his own happiness being the great rule of life.

The most distinguished system of morals among the Greeks was that of the Stoics, and it is generally esteemed to have been peculiarly favourable to virtue. It carries, indeed, an air of greatness and sublimity in it; but when examined will be found to be no friend to the humane and pleasing virtues. It was the great maxim of the Stoics that the soul of man, being of the same nature with God, is self-sufficient for virtue and happiness, insomuch that it is not in the power of the gods themselves to make a good man unhappy. Nay, so arrogantly did some of them talk, that they represented men as superior to the gods, saying, that these are wise by the necessity of their nature, but men by choice. Such notions as these could not but lay a foundation for a very dangerous and insufferable pride.

To support this strange hypothesis, with respect to a world in which the wisest and best of men are subject to pain and death, they were obliged to maintain, and they did it resolutely, that pain is no evil, and that length of time makes no addition to happiness. To promote an insensibility to pain, they maintained that men must suppress all passions, whether they be of the nature of love or hatred. They would not allow of anger, even at vice or injustice; and to make it the easier for persons to stifle their resentment on these occasions, they frequently represented all crimes as involuntary, and consequently such things as no person could have any reason to be surprised or offended at, especially since nobody could be a sufferer but the injurious person himself. For it was the great maxim of Epictetus, that it is naturally impossible for one man to be in fault, and another to be the sufferer. It is certainly very hard to conceive what real virtue such maxims as these could produce; and we shall see their mischievous tendency in several respects hereafter.

It is not difficult to point out several general maxims relating to morals, among modern unbelievers, which bear as unfriendly an aspect upon human virtue, if the idea that was given of it in the first part of these Institutes be just. Mr. Hume, the most acute of all modern unbelievers, con-

\* "In all actions of piety, *Socrates* took particular care to do nothing contrary to the custom of the Republic, and advised his friends to make that the rule of their devotion to the gods." Xen. Mem. Trans. 1720, B. i. p. 25. See also Leland, C. R. I. pp. 321, 322.

founds natural and moral qualities ; representing virtue to consist of any agreeable disposition or accomplishment, without distinction. Among the virtues, he particularly mentions wit, ingenuity, eloquence, quickness of conception, facility of expression, delicacy of taste, politeness, cleanliness and even force of body. On the other hand, he excludes from the rank of virtues *humility* and *self-denial*, saying that they are rejected by men of sense, because they serve no manner of purpose.

Spinoza also speaks of *repentance* as a mean, unreasonable and despicable thing. Agreeably to these maxims, Mr. Hume speaks of a certain degree of *pride* and *self-valuation*, the want of which is a vice, and the opposite to which is meanness. It is possible, indeed, to explain these terms so as to vindicate Mr. Hume's assertions ; but if we collect his meaning from all that he has said upon the subject, it is impossible not to conceive that he intends to stigmatize as a vice, that which is recommended in the gospel as an amiable virtue, as peculiarly pleasing in the sight of God, and what even right reason approves.

Mr. Chubb confines the whole business of criminality to acts which affect the community. He speaks of it as unworthy of God to resent any blasphemies against himself, and he treats with nearly the same indifference all injuries to private persons only. Bolingbroke also says, that all the sanctions of the law of nature affect men collectively considered, and not as individuals. So low an opinion had Mr. Chubb of the excellent and truly rational morals of our Saviour, that he scruples not to assert, that all the alteration he made in Judaism was for the worse, that those precepts by which Christianity is peculiarly distinguished, are less perfect than those which prevailed before, and that they are inconsistent with the welfare and happiness of mankind.\*

The obligation of *sincerity* and integrity seems to have been very weak in the minds of several unbelievers. Hobbes advanced that that idolatry to which a man is compelled by the terrors of death, is not idolatry. Others have adopted the same maxim, and have even ridiculed Christians for dying martyrs to the truth.

The apologies that were made for vice by the Stoics, have likewise been adopted by unbelievers of modern times. Lord Herbert says, that those persons are not lightly to be condemned who are carried to sin by their bodily constitu-

\* Chubb's Posth. Works, I. p. 27, &c. in Leland, D. W. I. p. 352.

tion; and he particularly instances in lust and anger. Such persons he represents as no more to be blamed than a dropical person for his immoderate thirst, or a lethargical person for his laziness and inactivity. He also apologizes for many vices, as not being committed out of enmity to God, but with a view to men's own particular advantage or pleasure, being chosen by them under the appearance of some good. He might not attend to it, but certainly there is no crime, for which this maxim will not furnish an apology.\*

The most obvious of all virtues, and those of the most acknowledged obligation, are the *social* ones. When any of the social duties are neglected, some of our fellow-creatures are injured, and cannot forbear complaining, or seeking some method of redress. Indeed, without a tolerable observance of social duties, society could not subsist. Public wrongs are always things of great notoriety, so that mankind cannot but attend to them, and be convinced of their malignant and destructive nature. Among all nations, therefore, we find a pretty just notion of the distinction between right and wrong; and the duties of society have always been the most generally practised. But even this branch of the system of morals was exceedingly imperfect among the Greeks and Romans, and was by no means favourable to the sentiments of a refined, generous and extensive humanity, which considers all mankind as brethren, the common offspring of one great and good Parent, and admonishes us to do to others as we would that they should do to us. †

\* The moral character of Lord Herbert has been placed higher, by the courtesy of his Christian opponents, than his Lordship's admissions, in his *Life* written by himself, will justify. A correspondent of Dr. Leland, who communicated the *surprising incident*, respecting the *Book de Veritate*, from the *Life*, then only in M.S. "mentions that Lord's good conduct when he was Ambassador at Paris." D. W. I. p. 42. Yet, by his Lordship's own confession, given in an earlier part of the same *Life*, he was there guilty even of conjugal infidelities. These, indeed, he recollected with regret, yet not without such palliations of his conduct as the gospel morality would disallow. The two passages of that interesting *Life*, present the strange appearance of the author's solemn devotion to the Supreme Being, whose acknowledged commands he was yet allowing himself grossly to violate. See the "*Life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury*." 3rd Edition, 4to. 1778, pp. 144 and 172. The Master of Christians recommended a different conduct, in the search after truth. John vii. 17.

† The following often admired sentiments of two eminent Romans, were nothing less than severe censures on the practice of their government. Cicero described the world as only one community. *Univcrsus hic mundus una civitas communis hominum existimanda*. Terence makes one of his characters declare his sympathy with the human race. *Homo sum, et humani a me nil alienum puto*. Yet the baneful influence of the Roman power has been thus justly described: "As the over-boiling of their ambition shed itself over the whole earth, so the sighs and groans of East and West met and echoed perpetually betwixt their walls; and if it had been likewise pos-

The Greeks, in general, do not appear to have had any higher object than the good of their respective states, or at most that of the community of Greeks. Even Socrates, when he directs his hearers to consider all Greeks as brethren, speaks of the Barbarians (by whom were meant all other nations,) as their natural enemies; and he prescribes such rules of conduct with respect to them, as are not reconcileable to the common rules of humanity. It is well known to have been a maxim at Sparta, that probity and every thing else is to be sacrificed to the good of the State. These Spartans, having conquered a neighbouring nation, the Helots, kept them for several hundred years in a state of the most abject slavery; and lest they should grow too numerous, they frequently butchered them in cold blood; and their youths were not only connived at, but applauded when they killed them by surprise, to inure them to the bloody and deceitful business of war. For with them a victory gained by artifice, was reckoned to be of double value. \*

In most of the heathen states we find customs utterly irreconcilable with humanity and virtue, particularly that of exposing sickly children to be devoured by wild beasts. In Sparta, every child was examined by public inspectors, who determined whether it should be brought up or exposed, and for this they are commended by Plutarch.† Plato, in his book of Laws, orders, that when persons are past the age of having strong children, they should use means to prevent their being born alive, or kill them after they were born. Aristotle also says, that there should be laws to prevent the education of weak children. In several ancient heathen nations, the aged and infirm were exposed. Among the Persians this was done without any scruple.

At Rome it was the general custom to leave their old and

sible, that all the blood which, by their commissions, was drawn from the sides of mankind, could have met at Rome, the source was capacious enough to have made a river pass before their Senate door as big as their Tiber.—The magnificentest triumphs did certainly by a reflexion represent to some eyes nothing but horror; because they were always proportioned to the extent of desolations, brought on those who had the souls and faces of men. But policy had need of all its stratagems to confound the judgment of a soldier." *Of the Confusions and Revolutions of Governments*. 12mo. 1649. Pref. by A. Ascham, a Civilian, who, in 1650, was assassinated by several Royalists at Madrid, where he was then *Resident* for the *Commonwealth*. See Wood Ath. Oxon. II. p. 268.

\* See the account of the *Cryptia* or *Ambuscade*, in Plutarch's Life of Lycinrgus ad fin.

† "It was not left to the father to rear what children he pleased—if a child was weakly and deformed, they ordered it to be thrown into a deep cavern," &c. Id. Langhorne, I. p. 132. See also Potter's *Antiq.* II. p. 333.

sick slaves to perish on a certain island in the Tiber ; and the favourite entertainment of the Roman people, for many ages, was the barbarous exhibition of gladiators, some of whom fought with each other, and some with wild beasts. In this manner many hundreds of slaves, carefully trained up for the purpose, have been sacrificed at one time. \* This was one of the horrid customs which owed its abolition to the mild spirit of Christianity.

One would have thought that compassion for the distressed had been so deeply rooted in the human heart, and had so much the sanction of natural conscience, that it could not have been in the power of philosophy to exclude it from a system of morals ; and yet those great moralists the Stoics, absolutely proscribed it. Their *wise men* must have no passions, and consequently no sympathy. Epictetus, indeed, allows a philosopher to condole with his common friends *in words*, if that will afford them any relief ; but he bids him be very careful that, in reality, he *feels* nothing all the time.

Some of the philosophers recommend the forgiveness of injuries, but others praise a spirit of *revenge*, particularly Democritus ; and when Plato introduces Socrates as recommending forgiveness, he speaks of it as contrary to the sentiments of the generality of the philosophers.

The obligation of *truth* seems to be equal, if not superior to that of humanity and compassion, on account of its obvious importance to society, and yet the maxims of some of the philosophers tended to undermine it. The Stoics thought that lying was lawful if it was profitable, and Plato says, that man may tell a lie who knows how to do it at a proper time.

Having found the Greek philosophers such loose moralists with respect to the social virtues above-mentioned, we cannot expect from them any great strictness with respect to the *commerce of the sexes*. None of the philosophers ever represented simple fornication, especially on the part of the man, as any vice at all, though its tendency is so pernicious to society, and the practice of it so much depraves the heart. Cato commended a young man for frequenting the public

\* It has been remarked, from Montesquieu, that " the Romans being accustomed to trample upon mankind in the persons of their children and their slaves, could know but very little of that virtue which we distinguish by the name of humanity." Macquer's Rom. Hist. by Nugent, 1760, p. 462. See, on this subject, Dr. Robertson's Sermon, in 1755, on " The Situation of the World at the Time of Christ's Appearance." 5th Ed. pp. 30, 31.

stews, \* and Cicero expressly speaks of fornication as a thing that was never found fault with. †

Many of the *customs* of the Greeks and Romans, and especially their religious customs, promoted a disposition to lewdness. Some of these have been already mentioned. At Sparta, young women appeared naked in the public exercises, and when married women had no children, their husbands were encouraged to lend them to other men, a custom which Plutarch vindicates. ‡ This was also agreeable to the doctrine of the Stoics; and it is well known that that rigid Stoic, Cato of Utica, lent his wife to his friend Hortensius. § Plato, in his book of Laws, recommends a community of women, and he advises that soldiers be not restrained with respect to any kind of sensual indulgence, even the most unnatural species of it, when they are upon an expedition.

Incestuous marriages were common in some Gentile nations, especially Egypt and Persia; but they were condemned in Greece and Rome.

Let us now see what maxims relating to the mutual intercourse of mankind have been adopted by the more celebrated of our modern unbelievers. Bayle says, that the prohibition of *revenge* is contrary to the law of reason and nature, and Tindal makes the doctrine of the *forgiveness of injuries* an objection to Christianity. || This writer also speaks very slightly of the obligation of *truth*.

Unbelievers in general make very light of the obligation of *chastity*, especially Tindal and Bolingbroke. This last mentioned writer does not admit that *adultery* (which, in

\* Hor. L. i. Sat. ii. l. 31, &c.

† Orat. pro M. Cœlio. "This passage is often quoted by the libertine with abundance of triumph and satisfaction, as giving a kind of sanction to his debaucheries. But there is no great reason for triumph: Cicero the orator, and Cicero the philosopher, speak often very different language; and whenever this is the case, surely the sentiments of the latter are to be preferred to those of the former. He is here pleading the cause of Cœlius, whom he knew to be a libertine, and a great part of what he advances must be looked upon as mere declamation, so that no great stress is to be laid upon it: in his *Offices*, and his other philosophical writings, he talks in a very different strain, as all know who have read them with any degree of attention. The debauchee therefore, if he would have Cicero for his advocate, must take Cicero for his guide, must renounce the pernicious path of vice and folly, exchange the gratifications of a brute for the pleasures of a man; in a word, he must make virtue his choice, and then happiness will certainly be his portion." Note by Sir Charles Whitworth to "Select Orations of M. T. Cicero. Translated by Professor Duncan." 1777. II. p. 40.

‡ Life of Lycurgus. Langhorne, I. p. 121. See Bayle's opinion in Leland, C. R. II. p. 132. Note.

§ Plutarch's Life of Cato. Langhorne, V. p. 70.

|| Leland, C. R. II. p. 125.

ancient heathen states, was generally punished with death) is a violation of the law of nature, and he says that *polygamy* is founded on the law of nature. *Incest* he admits to be unnatural, but only in the highest degrees, as between fathers and daughters, sons and mothers; but concerning this he does not pretend to be very positive.

If men do not feel and acknowledge the obligation of social virtue, it cannot be expected that they should think themselves under any restraint where the rights of others have no place. When the authority of God, and of the magistrate, are both out of the question, the reasons for *purity* and *decency of conduct*, derived from nature only, cannot be supposed to weigh much against the bias of inclination. To provide for a man's happiness in this life was the great object of all the philosophers of antiquity; and though some of them considered happiness as consisting in virtue only, and others in tranquillity of mind, as well as of body, Aristippus, and the Alexandrian school, which was one of the last that was formed, made *corporeal pleasure* only, to be the ultimate end of man.

The Stoics allowed of very great indulgence of the senses, and were generally great drinkers. Cato of Utica was remarkably addicted to this vice,\* so was Zeno, the founder of the sect, and Chrysippus died in consequence of drinking to excess at a sacrifice.

The maxims of the heathen philosophers with respect to the commerce of the sexes have been already mentioned, and their practice with respect to those vices which are justly styled *unnatural* was not less exceptionable; and though it is hardly credible, yet these vices also had too much of the sanction of some legislators and *philosophers*, and were countenanced by the example of many of them. Xenophon informs us that *sodomy* was encouraged by the public laws of several of the states of Greece. It was more especially so among the Cretans, in order to prevent their having too many children. Solon, one of the seven wise men of Greece, and the celebrated lawgiver of Athens, forbade this practice to slaves, which necessarily conveys the idea of his thinking it fit for free men only. According to Cicero, the Greek philosophers not only generally practised, but even gloried in this vice; and Plutarch informs us, that many parents would not suffer their children to keep the company of those philosophers, who pretended to be fond of

\* Plutarch says, "in process of time he came to love drinking and would sometimes spend the whole night over the bottle." Langhorne, V. p. 51.

them. Diogenes was remarkable for indulging himself in the most abominable practices openly, and without any sense of shame; affecting, according to the maxim of the Cynics, to live according to nature. These unnatural vices were increased in a most astonishing manner about the time of the promulgation of Christianity. Seneca says, that in his time they were practised openly, and without shame, at Rome.\*

When *pleasure* was considered as the great end of living, and when the authority of God and of conscience was disclaimed, it cannot be wondered that whenever this end of life was despaired of, life itself should be abandoned. We therefore naturally expect that *self-murder* should be recommended by the Epicureans, and other philosophers, whose principles were similar to theirs, when life should become a burthen; and in this we are not disappointed. But it was chiefly recommended and practised by the Stoics, who pretended to renounce pleasure, as an act of heroism and magnanimity. The usual saying of their gravest philosophers on this subject was, *If the house be smoky, the door is open, and you may walk out*; and history informs us, that many of the most eminent Stoics died by their own hands, especially the famous Cato of Utica, and Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, who killed himself when he was very old, after breaking a finger which proved to be very painful to him.†

Sometimes, indeed, these philosophers talked in a different strain, and advised persons not to abandon life, till God, who placed them in it, should give the signal; but it is in vain to expect a perfect consistency in any of the systems of the philosophers. They were perpetually charging one another, and indeed very justly, with inconsistencies, and many other absurdities. Whatever the philosophers might think, or practise, in this respect, the legislators of antiquity did not adopt the same maxims: for, in several ancient states, we find *self-murder* branded by an ignominious treatment of the body, and other penalties.

If we look into the writings of many of the modern unbelievers, we shall find them as little restrained in their pleasures while they live, and as little scrupulous with

\* On the subject of this paragraph may be consulted Potter's *Antiq.* I. pp. 59 & 172. Young's *Idol. Corrupt.* II. p. 204, and their authorities. Yet Archbp. Potter, in *Antiq.* B. iv. Ch. ix. II. p. 241, Dr. Trapp, in a prefatory Note to Virgil's 2d *Eclogue*, and Dr. Ford, in a Note to his translation of Plutarch *de Liberis, &c. Morale*, I. p. 34, have each endeavoured to vindicate the reputation of the philosophers.

† He strangled himself, says Laert. L. vii. S. 28, or died by abstaining from food, according to Lucian. See Leland, C. R. II. pp. 191, 192. Thus also died *Atticus*.

respect to abandoning life, when it becomes disagreeable to them. Helvetius, in his celebrated treatise, *De l'Esprit*, represents the love of pleasure as the voice of God; and, lest we should mistake his idea of pleasure, he says, that it is of two kinds only; consisting either in the gratification of the senses, or in procuring the means of gratifying them. He also says, that it is not agreeable to good policy to represent *gallantry* (under which term he includes commerce with married women) as a vice in a moral sense.\* Indeed the design of his whole treatise is to shew that happiness consists in sensual pleasure, and wisdom in pursuing it.

Modern unbelievers are almost universally advocates for *self-murder*;† and Mr. Blount, who wrote the *Oracles of Reason*, both recommended it, and practised it upon himself.‡ The same has been the end of many other unbelievers.§

Such having been the state of the heathen world, we shall see the propriety of those descriptions of it which we find in several parts of the New Testament, and which are suspected by many persons, who have not a sufficient knowledge of ancient times, to be hyperbolical and exaggerated. For though every corruption of genuine Christianity has tended, as will be shewn in its proper place, to debase the spirit of it, and to defeat the great purpose of it, in reforming the world, and promoting purity of morals; the corruption was never so great, not even in the darkest ages of popery, but that the belief of it was more favourable to virtue than the belief of the prevailing doctrines of the heathens at the time of the promulgation of Christianity. We often complain, and very justly, of the corruption of

\* "C'est une inconséquence politique que de regarder la galanterie, comme un vice moral: et si l'on veut lui conserver le nom de vice, il faut convenir, qu'il en est d'utiles dans certains siècles, et certain pays." *De l'Esprit*, Tom. I. Disc. ii. Ch. 15, in *Leland*, C. R. II. p. 86. Dr. L. remarks, that, "under the name of gallantry, especially in that nation to which this gentleman belongs, is comprehended an unlawful commerce with married women."

† Dr. Leland says, more correctly, as to "the moderns, who profess to be governed by the law of reason and natural religion," that "some of them have pleaded for the lawfulness of suicide:" and he instances one of the *Lettres Persanes*. C. R. II. p. 198.

‡ It does not appear that Mr. Blount recommended suicide. According to his biographer, Dr. Campbell, "after the death of his wife, he became enamoured of her sister," and wrote a treatise "upon the lawfulness of marrying two sisters successively," but not being able to remove the lady's scruples, "it threw him into a fit of despair, which ended in a frenzy, so that he shot himself in the head." Mr. Gildon, in his preface to a new edition of the *Oracles of Reason*, "defends Mr. Blount's manner of dying, and threatens to follow his example; but he lived to change his opinions." *Biog. Brit.* II. p. 385.

§ There is a striking instance of deliberate suicide related in *Mon. Repos.* III. p. 15.

the times, and such complaints were never more particularly loud than in the period preceding the Reformation; but the corruption was still short of that which (as we learn from the heathen writers themselves) generally prevailed in the heathen world.

Peter, speaking of the Gentiles, says that *they walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings and abominable idolatries*. [1 Pet. iv. 3.] And the apostle Paul says, *that being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, they gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to commit all iniquity with greediness*. [Ephes. iv. 19.] There are also many other passages in the writings of Paul, which represent the state of the heathen world as exceedingly corrupt indeed; and it was far from being in the way of being mended by the philosophy of those times.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the Doctrine of a FUTURE STATE among the Heathens.*

WE shall the less wonder at the imperfect state of morals, both with respect to theory and practice, in the heathen world, when we consider that they were destitute of those great sanctions of virtue, which are derived from the consideration of the authority and moral government of God, especially as extending to a life beyond the grave. We find more of the belief of a future life of retribution in the earlier ages of the heathen world; but, if we judge of it from the representation of the poets, among whom only we must look for the real opinion of the vulgar, and the maxims of the popular religion, we shall find that, about the time of the earliest Greek poets, the popular notions of a future state were such as could be of no farther use than to restrain the greater kinds of crimes, but that it could furnish no motives to aim at any high degree of purity, and real excellence of character.

According to the poets, the state of the best men after death was very melancholy, and undesirable, notwithstanding the charming descriptions which they sometimes give of it. In Homer, Achilles in the Elysian shades tells Ulysses, who is represented as meeting him there, that he had rather be a rustic on earth, serving a poor man for hire, and having but scanty fare, than have a large empire over the dead.\*

\* Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom,  
Nor think vain words (he cry'd) can ease my doom;

Lame as these popular notions of a future state were, the Greeks and Romans had no opportunity of having their minds impressed with them, but by listening to the traditions of their parents, or the songs of their poets, or by gazing at the pageantry which was exhibited at their religious mysteries. There was no provision, in any heathen country, for making these things the subject of grave discourses, delivered to the common people, by persons for whose character they had a respect.

When this subject came to be canvassed by the philosophers, who rejected the traditions on which the vulgar belief was founded, the doctrine of a future state was first doubted of, and then generally disbelieved and discarded. And, considering what slender evidence there is for this doctrine, on the principles of the light of nature only, it is no wonder that this should have been the consequence of reasoning upon the subject. We shall see that all things have taken the very same turn among modern unbelievers, who have rejected the authority of revelation, which is the great support of the doctrine of a future life in the present age.

All the heathen philosophers, not excepting Socrates himself, speak with great uncertainty concerning a future life. One of the last things he said to his friends, who attended upon him at the time of his death, was, "I am going to die, and you continue in life, but which of us shall be in a better state is known to none but God."\* Besides, this philosopher speaks of a future state as the privilege of those only who addict themselves to philosophy, and says that the souls of the wicked transmigrate into bodies of ignoble animals; while the better kind of men, who are not philosophers, inhabit the better kind of animals.† Cicero, in his philosophical treatises, in which, however, he only professes to contend for the more *probable* opinions, and does not pretend to any certainty, declares in favour of the doctrine of a future life; but in his private letters to his friends, he talks in a quite contrary strain, or at least with the greatest possible uncertainty.‡

Rather I choose laboriously to bear  
A weight of woes, and breathe the vital air,  
A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,  
Than reign the scepter'd monarch of the dead.

Pope's Od. XI. 595—600.

\* Plato's *Phædo*, in *Leland*, C. R. II. pp. 338, 339.

† Id. *Opera*, in *Leland*, p. 307, &c.

‡ Dr. Middleton, whose justly-admired *History* is rather a panegyric than a criticism on the *Life of Cicero*, urges "that he was writing, in all probability, to Epi-

The Stoics did, in general, believe a future life; but it was of such a kind, as to be of little or no use in a moral respect. For they supposed that the souls of men, and of brutes also, having been originally part of the common soul of the universe, would, at length, be absorbed into it again, and consequently that all separate consciousness would be lost.\*

The *arguments* which are produced by the heathen philosophers in proof of a future life are exceedingly weak. That on which they seem to have laid the greatest stress was derived from the doctrine of *pre-existence*; and Cicero, in his reasoning upon this subject, asserts that the souls of men have existed from all eternity.† On this notion is founded the doctrine of the Platonists, that the knowledge we acquire in this present state is only a recollection of what we had been possessed of in a former.

Had the heathen philosophers believed a future life, in the same manner as Christians believe in it, they could not have failed to make the same obvious use of it, in strengthening the sanctions of virtue, and supporting them under the troubles of life, and the fear of death. But all the motives to virtue on which they lay any stress, are altogether independent of the consideration of a future life, being derived from the intrinsic excellence of virtue, and its complete sufficiency for happiness here, notwithstanding all the pains and troubles of life. Also, though we have many

cureans, and accommodating his arguments to the men," an opinion in which he is followed by Leland, C. R. II. p. 316. Middleton, however, subjoins the following admission, which is the more valuable from his supposed sceptical propensity: "From this general view of Cicero's *religion*, one cannot help observing, that the most exalted state of human reason is so far from superseding the use, that it demonstrates the benefit of a *more explicit revelation*: for though the *natural law*, in the perfection to which it was carried by Cicero, might serve for a sufficient guide to the few, such as himself, of enlarged minds and happy dispositions, yet it had been so long depraved and adulterated by the prevailing errors and vices of mankind, that it was not discoverable, even to those few, without great pains and study; and could not produce in them, at last, any thing more than a hope, never a full persuasion; whilst the greatest part of mankind, even of the virtuous and inquisitive, lived *without the knowledge of a God, or the expectation of a futurity*; and the multitude in every country was left to the gross idolatry of the popular worship. When we reflect on all this, we must needs see abundant reason to be thankful to God for the divine light of his Gospel; which has revealed at last, to babes, what was hidden from the wise; and, without the pains of searching, or danger of mistaking, has given us not only the hope, but the assurance, of happiness, and made us not only the believers, but the heirs of immortality." Middleton's *Cicero*, 2d Edit. III. pp. 356, 357. See Law's *Theory*, 7th Ed. p. 128, Note B.

\* "Concerning Death. 'Tis either a dispersion, or atoms, a vanishing, an extinction, or a translation to another state." Anton. Med. VII. 32. Glasgow, 1742, p. 169. See, also, IV. 21, V. 13, VII. 10, VIII. 25, ad fin. pp. 97, 122, 163, 192, and *Gataker* and *Leland* on the *Stoics*, in C. R. II. pp. 281—292.

† "Quicquid est istud quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vivit, quod riget, cœleste ac divinum est, ob eamque rem æternum sit necesse est." Tusc. Disput. L. i. C. 32. in *Leland*, C. R. II. p. 324.

specimens of their *topics of consolation* to their friends in distress, and of their own soliloquies in these circumstances, we find nothing in their writings that approaches to the joyful sentiments of Christians. The argument they universally have recourse to is the following: Death cannot be formidable, because it is either a remove for the better, or an utter extinction of being. For it is to be observed, that the philosophers, with one voice, rejected the opinion of *future torments*; so that, let a man have been ever so wicked, death, according to them, was the termination of all his sufferings.

Pythagoras, one of the oldest of the Greek philosophers, rejects the notion of future punishments, as a vain terror. Plato sometimes adopts the representations of the poets in this case, and at other times rejects them as conveying too frightful an idea of a future state. Cicero not only disavows, but even ridicules, the doctrine of future punishments; and he represents it as the opinion of all the philosophers, that the gods are never angry, and that they are incapable of hurting any body.\*

It must also be observed, upon this subject, that the doctrine of *transmigration*, which was the belief of many heathen nations, conveys no idea of *punishment*, properly so called; because it was not supposed to have been attended with any consciousness of what had passed in a former state.

The ancient Germans had a notion of a future state, and of certain brutal pleasures, to be enjoyed in the palace of Odin; but they had no respect to moral virtue, as they were supposed to be reserved for those who should die in battle only.†

Uncertain and imperfect as were the notions of a future state among the Greeks and Romans, we find little or no remains of them about the time of the promulgation of Christianity. In that learned and inquisitive age we have the most undeniable evidence that the belief of a future life was generally rejected, both by the philosophers and the vulgar.

\* See, on the subject of this paragraph, *Leland*, C. R. II. pp. 361—365.

“Tous les hommes qui ont été tués à la guerre depuis le commencement du monde se rend au palais d’Odin,” the *Valhalla*, at each of whose 540 gates, 8 heroes might issue forth to combat. To the inquiry “quelle est la récréation des héros lorsqu’ils ne boivent pas?” it is replied, “Tous les jours, lorsqu’ils sont habillés, ils prennent les armes, entrent en lice, et se mettent en pièces les uns les autres, c’est leur divertissement; mais aussitôt que l’heure du repas approche, ils remontent à cheval tout sains, et saufs, et s’en retournent boire au palais d’Odin.” *M. Mallet* here finds “une idée des amusemens des anciens Celtes.” See *Edda* par *Mallet*. A. Genève, 1787 12mo. 20 Feb. 174, 177, 179.

This was chiefly owing to the pretended *science* of those days ; and the æra of the declension of the traditional opinions at Rome is well known to have been the introduction of the Greek philosophy into that city. Polybius blames the great men of his time for teaching the common people to despise the fables of the poets, representing them as *useful fictions* ; \* and Cicero speaks of future punishments as what hardly an old woman in his time believed. † Bolingbroke says, that the belief of a future state was rejected by many who made pretensions to learning and philosophy, that it was considered as doubtful and uncertain by the rest of them, and that it had been so much blended with fables, that it had but little hold even on the vulgar opinion.

It was the opinion of Bolingbroke himself, that the whole man is dissolved at death, ‡ and he certainly had no hope of a resurrection ; and though he acknowledges it may be useful to mankind to believe the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, yet he says, it is a fiction, having no real foundation in nature and reason ; and both he and Mr. Collins, who likewise rejects this doctrine, say, but without any proof, that it was an invention of the Egyptians. §

It is usual with many persons, on their first becoming un-

\* Polyb. Hist. L. vi. C. 54, 55, in *Leland*, C. R. II. pp. 378, 379.

† Quæ Anus tam excors inveniri potest, quæ illa, quæ quondam credebantur, apud inferos portenta extimescat." De Nat. Deor. L. ii. C. 2. in *Leland*, C. R. II. p. 382.

‡ Dr. Leland describes Lord B. as affirming, in the character of a *plain man*, that, "*Revelation apart*, all the phenomena from our birth, to our death, seem repugnant to the immateriality and immortality of the soul." D. W. II. p. 247. Many Christians, though they would not rest here with Lord B. would yet agree with his *plain man* and feel no alarm as to futurity, from "denying that the soul is a spiritual or immaterial substance distinct from the body." P. 248. Dr. L. indeed contends with Bolingbroke, and other Deists, on this subject, as if he had never heard of a Christian Materialist ; a circumstance unworthy of his learning and general information. See Page 60, Note, ad fin.

§ Mr. Collins is endeavouring to shew from *Ecclesiastes* ix. 5 and 10, that Solomon, "argues against a future state," while he professes to be "persuaded—of the immortality of the soul, upon the authority of Jesus Christ." He then observes, "that the immortality of the soul was no where plain in the Old Testament—was thought doubtful by most sects of the Grecian philosophers, and denied by the Stoics—had never, according to Cicero, (Tusc. Quæst. Ed. Davisii. p. 93) been asserted in writing by any Greek author extant in his time, before Pherecydes of the Island Syrus; and was first taught by the Egyptians, (Herodotus Ed. Genev. p. 123,) or, according to our learned Sir John Marsham, was the most noble invention." (Chron. Canon. p. 217.) See "Discourse of Free-thinking," 1713, p. 152. From this passage it could not be correctly said, that Collins asserted, respecting the Egyptians, "without any proof," or that he rejected "the doctrine of future rewards and punishments," unless indeed he may be thought to insinuate his unbelief in the *New Testament*, by representing it as teaching the mission of "Jesus Christ into the world, who (as God and Man, and God's Son, and the same numerical Being with that God whose Son he was, and yet personally distinct from him), only could by his suffering and death give an infinite satisfaction, to an infinitely offended, and infinitely merciful God, appease his wrath, and thereby save the Elect." Id. p. 153.

believers, to boast of the sufficiency of the light of nature, with respect to the knowledge of God, the rule of human duty, and the doctrine of a future state. But, if we judge from observation, we shall be led to conclude, either that this was a mere pretence, in order to get rid of revelation, or else, that these unbelievers themselves were not sufficiently aware how much the serious belief of a future life depends upon the belief of revelation; and consequently how much that belief would be shaken when the ground on which it had been built was removed. For after rejecting revelation for some time, they have generally given up the belief which, at first, they professed to have, in the moral government of God here or hereafter; and at present there are, I believe, very few unbelievers in revelation, who will pretend to have any serious expectation of a future life. In foreign countries this fact is notorious, and they are therefore generally called *Atheists*; and, indeed, when the doctrine of a future life is abandoned, men may almost as well reject the belief of a God also.

Mr. Chubb is a remarkable instance of one who went through all the stages of free thinking and infidelity, speaking at first of a future state with certainty, then with uncertainty, and lastly, with absolute unbelief. Upon the supposition of a future life, he says, that those who die in their youth will not be called to judgment, nor those who act a low part in life. In another place he represents it as absolutely doubtful, whether the soul perishes with the body, or subsists after it; and at the same time he declares that, if the soul be perishable with the body, "there can be no place for argument with regard to a future state of existence to men, or of a future retribution; because when the human frame is once dissolved by death, the man ceases to be, and is no more."\*

Mr. Hume directly argues against the doctrines of a providence, and a future state of rewards and punishments. Those, says he, are vain reasoners, and invert the order of nature, who, instead of regarding this present life, and the present scene of things, as the sole object of their contemplation, render it a passage to something farther; and yet, he says, that those who attempt to disabuse men of their prejudices in favour of a future state, may, for aught he

\* Chubb's *Posth. Works*, I. pp. 312, 313, in *Leland*, D. W. I. p. 325. Dr. L. concludes, from the connexion of this passage, that Chubb inclined most "to the materialists." His "absolute unbelief of a future state" has been much questioned, if not denied. See his *Life*, by Dr. Kippis, B. Brit. III. pp. 521—532.

knows, be good reasoners, but he "cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians; since they free men from restraint upon their passions, and make the infringement of the laws of equity and society in one respect more easy and secure." \*

I would observe, in this place, that the inference I draw from these observations respecting the moral maxims of unbelievers, is not, by any means, that there are no good moral characters in that class of men. As it is well known that many persons are much *worse*, so there are others, no doubt, much *better* than their principles. The conduct of men is greatly influenced by principles which they do not avow, and the operation of which they do not distinctly perceive; and also by early habits and dispositions, which act mechanically, and independently of any declared principle. But as far as avowed principles have any effect (and their effect on the minds of those who attend to them must be of *some* moment, and that continually increasing) their real operation, as well as their tendency, must be unfavourable to virtue.

Persons who have had a Christian education, may continue to act, in a great measure, upon Christian principles, after they become *nominal unbelievers*; especially if a virtuous and decent conduct have become habitual to them, if temptations to act otherwise be not very strong, and if they act without much reflection. But I own, that I do not see how I can have the same dependence upon a man's acting a truly virtuous and disinterested part, especially in a case where a considerable risk must be run, with respect to fortune or life, whether he believe in a future state, or not; especially if he have time to *reflect* on the hazard that he runs with respect to things of the most importance to him. If, however, an unbeliever should sacrifice his fortune, or his life, in a good cause, which I do not say is impossible, it would give me a very high idea of the force of good habits, and mechanical propensities in him, but a proportionably low opinion of his understanding. It would argue such a weakness of intellect, or such inattention to his known interest, as I should not presume to find in any man. In order to gain my *entire confidence*, I must see a man's reason, his *interest*, and his *passions*, all leading the same way.

But the use that I would make of the observations above-mentioned, is to shew that we are not to expect either *clearness* or *consistency* of moral principles upon the light of

nature ; and therefore that, as far as clearness and consistency of such principles are of importance to mankind, (and no doubt they must be of great importance,) they furnish an evidence of the great *expediency*, if not of the absolute *necessity* of Divine revelation, without which so important an advantage was not to be expected.

Whatever we may now think of the *sufficiency of the light of nature*, some of the most intelligent of the heathen philosophers were not insensible of the darkness in which they were involved, and expressed the sense they had of the want of some Divine illumination. There are several remarkable expressions of Socrates and Plato to this purpose. Socrates, speaking of the corruption of his times, said, that "there was no hope of amending men's morals, unless God should be pleased to send some other person to instruct them ;" and Plato says, that "whatever is right, and as it should be, in the present evil state of the world, can only be so by the particular interposition of God." Socrates meeting Alcibiades, as he was going to a temple to pray, endeavoured to convince him that he knew not what to pray for as he ought, till God should dispel the darkness of his mind, and seems to refer to some *instructor*, whom God might send for that purpose.\* To mention no more instances, one of the speakers in the celebrated dialogue of Plato, relating to the last scenes of the life of Socrates, speaking of the uncertainty in which they were, with respect to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, concludes, that it is best to follow that opinion which should appear to be the most probable, after their most diligent inquiry ; unless they could have a still more sure and certain conduct, to carry them through this life, such as a Divine discovery of the truth would be.

The latter Platonists and Pythagoreans were so far from thinking Divine communications to be either needless or incredible, that after the promulgation of Christianity, they themselves pretended to frequent impulses and inspirations, and had recourse to their initiations, and various magical ceremonies, in order to procure them.† It was, moreover,

\* Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, 8th Ed. p. 309, &c. P. The passage quoted by Dr. Clarke, is in the "Dialogue concerning Prayer," entitled, "*the second Alcibiades*." Socrates is made to say "Tis necessary that a man should wait till he has learnt what disposition he ought to be in, towards the gods and towards men." Alcibiades replies "But, Socrates, how long will it be before that time comes ; and who is he that will instruct me?" Socrates rejoins, "It is he whose care you are the object of." It has been not improbably supposed that no instructor was here designed, but Socrates himself. See 2nd Alcibiad. translated by Sydenham, 1776. 4to. pp. 103, 104.

† See Abbé De la Bléterie, Vie De L'Empereur Julien, Paris, 1746, on the Platonism of that age, p. 58, also on Julian's *Initiation*, p. 67.

the general opinion of the heathens, that Orpheus, and others of their ancient poets, wrote by a Divine afflatus.\*

It is also a consideration of great importance, that when the authority of the old *traditional religion* was worn out, something of the same *positive* nature was wanted to supply its place. The *reason* of mankind was by no means sufficient for this purpose. When the passions of men are strongly engaged, and a favourite gratification is in view, reason interposes with little effect; whereas a positive precept, coming from *acknowledged authority*, might have real weight. Besides, men are seldom at a loss to find excuses for their favourite indulgences, and they will define *virtue* in such a manner, as to make their own vices either not criminal at all, or to be so in a very slight degree.

We have seen that, in fact, this was the case with the ancients, in the most enlightened ages of the world; and it is remarkably the case with modern unbelievers. Nay, though the tendency of some vices, especially those which consist in the irregular indulgence of the senses, is, no doubt, highly injurious, debasing the very souls of men, and laying a foundation for great evils and distresses, both to individuals and society, and this at no great distance; yet the minds of men are so blinded and infatuated by these vices, that though they may think and act justly in other respects, they cannot, or will not see those consequences, but persist in making plausible apologies for the most flagitious conduct. How desirable then is it, that the wise Parent of the human race should interpose, and, by his express authority, forbid those practices, which he sees to be ultimately injurious to us.

If we attend but for a moment to the sentiments and conduct of mankind, we shall be convinced that *the ten commandments*, the plain rules of conduct laid down by our Saviour, and the authoritative denunciations of the apostles, are of infinitely more service to the cause of virtue, than all that men uninspired of God could ever say, or write upon the subject.

What is the great guardian of sobriety and chastity among us? Certainly not reason, or philosophy, which has generally made very light of the sanctions of those virtues, but such commands as these, *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, Ex. xx. 14. *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, &c. &c.

A reverence for God is not preserved upon the minds of men by the ideas they naturally have of the awful sanctity of every thing belonging to that great Being, who is the Maker, Preserver, and Judge of all, but by such precepts as these, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*, Ex. xx. 7 ; the express commands of Christ, *I say unto you swear not at all*; and the advice of the apostle James, *Above all things, my brethren, swear not*.

Even our lives and properties are, in many cases, more effectually secured by the precepts, *Thou shalt not commit murder, Thou shalt not steal*, and the solemn declaration of the apostle, *Neither thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, than by any sense that men, inflamed by avarice, or revenge, can be supposed to have of the *value of life*, and the *natural right* which every man has to it, and to his goods lawfully acquired.

If these observations be just, and I doubt not but that the recital of them will impress upon the minds of all persons, who have a sufficient knowledge of human nature and of the world, a conviction of their truth, Divine Revelation must have been a matter of great importance, if it had been nothing more than the interposition of a *competent authority*, in favour of those rules of conduct which right reason might have investigated, but which reason, in a variety of circumstances, might also have *evaded*; and it ought ever to be considered that, in proportion to the real value, usefulness, and consequently desirableness of positive or revealed religion, is its *antecedent credibility*.

Upon the whole, such was the actual state of the heathen world, that it cannot surely be doubted, but that Divine Revelation was highly *expedient*, and even *necessary*, for the restoration of virtue and happiness.

Without pretty just notions of God, and his moral government; without a satisfactory knowledge of our duty and future expectations, we should have been little better than brute animals. At least, a man destitute of this knowledge must be incapable of these *exalted sentiments*, and that *dignity of conduct*, which render him an unspeakably greater and happier being. And, since we are naturally capable of these improvements, nothing but a sufficient degree of *knowledge* being requisite to the attainment of them, the noblest end of human nature seems to be defeated in a state of gross ignorance. It is like fixing a plant in a soil where it cannot find its proper nourishment, and for want of which

it can never flourish, so as to be what it was capable of being.

For, admitting that it may not be absolutely impossible for the Divine Being to suffer an entire race of rational creatures, and the most conspicuous inhabitants of such a world as this, to become wholly degenerate and depraved, so as never to answer the important purposes for which they seem to have been made, there certainly can be no impropriety in his interposing to check that depravity, by communicating to them that knowledge, which alone is wanting to effect so great and benevolent a purpose.

Now let us form what idea we please of the *natural powers* of the human mind, it is hardly possible not to be satisfied, from a just view of the state of morals in the heathen world, that it was *morally impossible* they should ever have recovered even that degree of useful religious knowledge, of which they seem to have been formerly possessed, and much less that they would ever have made any important additions to their original stock.\* In such a state of things, the expectation of some divine interposition must, *a priori*, have been even reasonable, on account of its being so exceedingly seasonable, and advantageous. We may almost say, that *it became* the great and good Parent of the human race to afford his creatures and offspring that assistance, which, in their situation, they so much wanted, and which they were not capable of procuring for themselves.

\* Philosophy had shewn its utmost force in the great masters of *Athens* and *Rome*; and was able to afford just light enough to discover its own errors and defects. Its votaries having been long tossed to and fro, among the variety of systems which human wit had invented, were at last left in absolute uncertainty; unable to decide amongst them, and influenced by nothing more than some dark hints of tradition; and that became one of its most flourishing sects which professed to doubt of every thing: and, accordingly, we find the great advocate and ornament of this sect, *Cicero*, declaring, on some of the most important points, that it was impossible to determine on which side lay (not the certainty, for that they did not pretend to discover, but) even the greatest probability; concluding that, in all such cases, 'tis much easier for him to say what is not his opinion, than what is. Nay, professing that, in the grand article of a First Cause, if he had discovered the truth, he durst not have divulged it: and putting the supposition as a matter of probability, that the philosophers were atheists. Men began then to be sensible, that human reason was of itself a very insufficient director in this point; and grew weary of the common delusions from pretended revelation. *Cicero, Tusc. Quæst. L. i. Sect. xi. De Nat. Deor. L. i. C. 132. De Univers. Sect. ii. De Inventione, Lib. i. C. 29. Acad. ii. 3, in Law's Theory, pp. 126—130.*

## CHAPTER II.

OBSERVATIONS PREVIOUS TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE  
PROPER EVIDENCES OF REVELATION.

## SECTION I.

*Of the Nature and Use of* MIRACLES.

SOME may think it not suitable to the wisdom of God, to leave his creatures in need of occasional assistance. A Being of infinite wisdom, they say, would make his works so perfect at first, as never to want it. But the only reason why it is wise in men to aim at this is, because they cannot always be present with their works, or because it would be troublesome to attend to them. Also, their being present, or not present with their works, is of no consequence to their operation. Whereas God is already every where present, and as he constantly supports all the laws of nature, the changing the course of it implies no additional attention or trouble.

Besides, it is of the utmost importance to the great ends of the rational creation, that the Almighty Maker should be *considered* as present with his works. For any thing that we know, therefore, the best of all schemes may be that in which the Divine agency and interposition are never wholly superseded; and though, as was shewn before, it be wise, and even necessary to establish *general laws*, yet occasional deviations from them may contribute more to promote the same great end, than a perfect uniformity.

With respect to *men*, and perhaps all other moral agents, there seems to be an evident propriety in the Divine Being exciting their attention to his presence and government, by occasional *departures* from the laws of nature; for by this means we more easily preserve a just sense of our connexion with, and dependence upon God. Whenever any appearances become quite *uniform*, and *constant*, they cease to strike; insomuch, that it is very possible even for nations of mankind, who have never been taught any thing concerning

God, to pass their whole lives, in the view of all the wonders of creation, without ever raising their thoughts to the great Author of all. Whereas, if the usual connexion of causes and effects be interrupted, and things happen contrary to their fullest expectations, founded upon long experience, their attention is immediately roused, and they cannot be satisfied till they understand both the efficient and final cause of so strange an appearance, that is, without knowing both what produced it, and for what reason it was produced. And a little reflection must satisfy them, that he only who ordained and established the course of nature, can alter it.

Whenever, therefore, the course of nature is interrupted, by the performance of a real miracle, men may be sure that the immediate finger of God is in it; and, therefore, that their attention ought to be excited to it.

Strictly speaking, indeed, it is improper to say that the laws of nature are violated in working of miracles, because they are no more than the effect of an adequate power in nature, exerted at proper seasons. It may be compared to a man's relieving a fly, or any small insect struggling with difficulties insurmountable by itself. But this view of miracles by no means affords any objection to the use of them that is here contended for, since whatever demonstrates the interposition of a power *superior to human*, must be referred to the operation of God, *mediately or immediately*, nor is it possible that any system of religion should have a stronger sanction than such works as these.

Some, indeed, have advanced, that there is no natural or necessary connexion between *miracles* and *doctrines*. But though this might have been urged very seriously by the ancient Jews or Pagans, who believed in magic, we need not scruple to say that, in this age, it must be most egregious trifling, and that it does not deserve any reply. At least it will be time enough to consider this objection, when some person shall be produced, who shall seriously say, that he believes the miracles, but not the doctrines. Spinoza himself, as Mr. Bayle assures us, said to his friends, that "if he could be convinced of the resurrection of Lazarus, he would break his whole system in pieces and readily embrace the common faith of Christians."

It may also be alleged as an argument for the use of miracles, that the more general is the corruption of religion, and consequently the more necessary revelation is, the less capable men are of perceiving the *internal* proofs of the

excellence of a Divine religion, and therefore the more occasion they have for *external* proofs, such as miracles afford.

It is possible that there may be intelligent beings, superior and invisible to us, and, their powers far exceeding ours, they may exert them in such a manner, as that to us the appearance will be the same as of a Divine interposition. But such an abuse of superior powers would be so fatal, that it cannot be supposed that a wise and good Being would permit it. Indeed, if this were the case, the Divine Being would leave himself no certain method of making his own power and designs known to his creatures, whatever occasion there might be for his interposition; as it would not be in their power to guard themselves from artful and malicious beings, who might take pleasure in misleading and confounding them. If ever, therefore, such beings be permitted to work miracles, we may depend upon it that they will be so circumstanced, that it will be in the power of men of virtue and good understanding to discover the cheat.

Upon the whole, however, it is not in the least degree probable, that any being, besides the Supreme, ever worked a real miracle; and, consequently, that all the wonders in which God himself has not been concerned have been the effects of *artifice* and *deceit*, so as to impose upon none but the ignorant and the credulous; and that men of understanding, who have opportunity of making proper inquiries, may see through and detect them.

## SECTION II.

### *Of the Nature of the Evidence for REVELATION.*

NATURAL religion being that knowledge of God, of our duty, and future expectations, which we acquire from our observations on the usual course of nature, *revealed religion* may be defined to be the knowledge, relating to the same subjects, which we acquire from *interruptions* of the usual course of nature, by the interposition of the God of nature, the sole controuller of the laws which he himself has established. Now the proper evidence that there has been any such interruption in the usual course of nature, or that any real miracles have been performed, must be the *testimony* of those who had an opportunity of examining the facts, in the same manner as, by our own observation, and that of

others together, we acquire a knowledge of the laws of nature themselves.

In some respects, however, the evidence of revelation borrows aid from other considerations, independent of human testimony, so as to be perfectly similar to the evidence for natural religion. The proper evidence for natural religion arises from *present appearances*, the doctrines of it being nothing more than the conclusions we draw from them. Could we possibly account for every thing that we see in the world around us without the supposition of an uncaused Being, there would have been no foundation for natural religion; but not being able to account for what we see without supposing the existence and agency of a Supreme Being, we are under a necessity of admitting that there is such a Being, and consequently of assenting to every other article of natural religion.

In like manner a variety of *present appearances* may be considered as so many standing evidences of several leading articles in revealed religion; because, unless we admit that the Divine Being has interposed in the government of the world, in such a manner as the histories of the Jewish and Christian revelations assert, it is impossible to give a satisfactory account of the known state of the world in past and present times; as, for instance, that such a system as Judaism should have been established, and such a religion as Christianity should have had that spread in the world, which all history shews that it had, in such circumstances as, the same history informs us, both the professors of that religion, and the world in general, then were.

In fact, the evidence from testimony itself is ultimately the same with this, being reduceable to the method of judging from known and even present appearances. For the reason why we are influenced by it, and act upon it, in any particular case, is that, from our knowledge of human nature, we have found that so circumstanced, it never has deceived us; so that human nature must be changed before such testimony could be fallacious. For the same reason, all historical evidence is ultimately an appeal to present appearances. For if things in time past had not been as they represent, the information we now receive concerning them, could not have been conveyed to us.

The argument from *prophecy* is of a mixed nature, resting, in general, upon the testimony of the friends of revelation, that such prophecies were actually delivered a sufficient time before the event, and upon the testimony of general

history, and the present state of things, for the accomplishment of them. Many of the scripture prophecies, however, even in the Old Testament, and almost all those of the New, are universally acknowledged to have been published prior to the events to which they correspond.

These three kinds of evidence for the Jewish and Christian revelations, viz. from *testimony*, from *present appearances*, and from *prophecy*, I shall consider in the order in which they are here mentioned.

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Importance of Testimony, and the Credibility of Miracles.*

SINCE one principal evidence of revelation depends upon *human testimony*, I shall first consider the importance of it, and then lay down some general rules for estimating the value of it.

The greatest part of our knowledge has no other foundation than testimony; and even when the proper foundation is of a different kind, our faith is much strengthened by means of it. For instance, when we ourselves form any rational conclusion from appearances, as that there is a God, we are much confirmed in our belief, by finding that many other persons have drawn the same conclusion, either from the same appearances or from any other.

Besides, the knowledge on which we act every day, depends chiefly upon *memory*, or our recollecting and believing that we once saw the evidence of the truths which may not now be obvious to us. For no person can pretend to be able, at all times, clearly to demonstrate every proposition to which he gives his firmest assent. Now belief, which depends upon *recollection*, is somewhat similar to that which depends upon *testimony*. In one case we believe that *we ourselves* have seen a thing to be what we now apprehend it to be, and in the other case we believe that *other persons* have seen it to be so.

We ought not, therefore, to think lightly of the nature of faith in revelation, because it is an *historical faith*, and depends upon *human testimony*; for the same is the foundation of the greatest, and most valuable part of human knowledge.

If we appeal to *experience*, to determine the *actual weight* and effect of different kinds of evidence, we shall be convinced that the evidence of testimony is adapted to give as

much satisfaction to the mind of man as any other kind of evidence. No person, I believe, who has read history, has any more doubt of there being such a city as Rome, of there having been such a person as Julius Cæsar, or of his having been killed there, than he has of the truth of the proposition that two and two make four. At least, if there be any difference in the *fullness of persuasion* in these two cases, it is altogether imperceptible; and any person would, in fact, venture as much upon the truth of the one, as upon that of the other.

Though it be true, indeed, in theory, that there is some small degree of uncertainty in every single testimony, which can never be wholly removed by any subsequent testimony (since this, also, must be liable to the same kind of uncertainty), yet there is also a degree of uncertainty, and a source of mistake, in drawing conclusions from self-evident truths, and especially when the chain of deduction is of considerable length.

Considering the great weight which testimony naturally has with mankind, we cannot but conclude that any thing may be proved by it, except such things as are contradicted by superior evidence, and such is, certainly, that of our own senses, comprehending not only our immediate perceptions, but even necessary conclusions from those perceptions. How incredible, therefore, soever, any fact may be *a priori*, since, if it be not absolutely impossible, it *may* be true, so also a certain degree of historical evidence must be sufficient to prove the truth of it.

We judge of other persons, and of the connexion between their sentiments, language and conduct, by ourselves; and knowing, by our own consciousness, that a *regard to truth* is a natural and very strong principle in the human mind, we take it for granted that the solemn declarations of others are founded in truth; and the general experience of *human veracity* confirms our disposition to give credit to human testimony, unless we can discover some reason for supposing that those who give us any information were either deceived themselves, or were much interested in deceiving others.

Mr. Hume,\* indeed, has advanced, that we ought not to listen to any evidence in favour of *miracles*, or of there ever having been a departure from the laws of nature, because

\* Phil. Es. Ed. 1750, Es. x. Of *Miracles*, answered in 1752 in an Essay by William Adams, M. A. Minister of St. Chads, Salop. See also Price's Dissert. iv.

every such evidence is contradicted by our own constant experience of the absolute uniformity of the laws of nature.

But, with respect to past facts, this is taking for granted the very thing to be proved, because it is asserted, by the friends of revelation, that the course of nature has not always proceeded without interruption, but that, for great and good purposes, the Divine Author of it has not confined himself to it, but has occasionally departed from it. In reality, therefore, all that Mr. Hume has advanced, with respect to this case, is, that there have been no miraculous events because there have been none. At least, it is judging from the experience of one age, against the express testimony of former ages, and in a case in which there is no contradiction between them; since both may be equally true: for the course of nature may be perfectly uniform now, and yet may not have been so, in all cases, formerly.

But let us suppose that we lived in the age in which the first miracle was said to be performed, and that there was no pretended evidence of any thing like it having happened before. In this case our constant experience of any course of events can only be a foundation for a *reasonable, or a certain degree of expectation*, that the same course will be continued, and by no means amounts to any thing like a demonstration that the same course will always be continued. The usual operations of nature, we have seen, are only different modes of the Divine agency; but though the Divine Being has thought proper to act in a perfectly uniform manner, during any given period of time, it cannot follow from thence, that there never can be a reason for his changing that mode of operation; unless our reasoning concerning him and his agency be quite different from our reasoning concerning other intelligent beings and their agency; and in this case there can be no foundation for such a difference.

Besides, if there be a God, and if the world, in its present state, have not been eternal, there must have been a time when the Divine Being did properly *interpose*, so as to form both it, and the plants and animals which are peculiar to it; and if there *has been* but one proper interposition in any period of time past, there *may*, according to Mr. Hume's own method of reasoning, be another.

It would also follow, from Mr. Hume's principles, that every *new fact* in philosophy must be absolutely incredible, till we can see how it arises from principles, the operation of which we have seen in other cases; and so the king of Siam will be justified in giving no credit to the Dutchmen,

who informed him that, in their country, water became sometimes so hard, that it would even bear men and carriages; for, living in an uniformly warm climate, he had never seen any such thing, and could not conceive that it was possible.\*

The evidence that the course of nature has been departed from, is the very same with that by which we judge when it is not departed from, and must be equally competent in both cases: for certainly the eyes, ears and other senses of men are equally capable of judging concerning all things which they are equally capable of perceiving. If a number of persons could distinguish their friend from all other men before he died, they must, being possessed of the same organs, be equally capable of distinguishing him from all other persons after he should be risen from the dead. And whatever Mr. Hume, or any other person, may pretend concerning the *natural incredibility* of all accounts of miracles, I doubt not but that such testimony as this would have its weight even with themselves.

Nothing can be naturally more improbable than the case I have mentioned, viz. of a person rising from the dead; and yet I do not believe that any person can be so incredulous, but that, if only half a dozen persons, of his own previous nomination, should seriously report that, having perfectly known a person who was said to be risen from the dead, and having conversed with, and examined him, they were satisfied he was no impostor, but the very same person with whom they had been acquainted before, he would believe them; so that his own real feelings would be such a demonstration of the *actual power of testimony*, as none of his sophistry could evade. Now it will be shewn, that the evidence of the resurrection of Christ is even much more satisfactory than this; the witnesses of it being, in reality, more unexceptionable than such as any person would have previously nominated for that purpose.

It is readily acknowledged, that many propositions are, in their own nature, absurd, and therefore that no evidence whatever can be of any avail to the proof of them. If, for instance, a person should do what I should not be able to distinguish from a real miracle, pretending to prove by it that the sun did not rise yesterday, to contradict such a notorious historical fact as, there is such a place as Rome, or to refute so plain a proposition as this, that two and two

make four, he will not persuade me to admit any thing so contrary to experience, to common sense, or to unquestionable human testimony.

Also, the great outlines of natural religion, respecting the providence and goodness of God, and the great rules of human duty, though they be not, strictly speaking, demonstrable, yet their very high degree of probability, and their great importance to mankind, give them such a sanction, that we ought not to listen to any evidence that would tend to undermine them. We may take it for granted, that God cannot contradict himself. Whatever, therefore, he clearly appears to be in his works, we may assure ourselves that he will also appear to be, in any revelation that he shall please to make of himself. He cannot appear good and merciful in one method of making himself known, and cruel and unjust in another. Nothing, therefore, can be admitted as contained in any revelation, that is pretended to come from God, which is contrary to the plain principles of natural religion, already demonstrated.

Since, however, there appear to be many *difficulties* on the subject of natural religion, and many of our conclusions have only a small degree of probability in their favour, we must by no means take it for granted, that such conclusions are always just, but must expect that a revelation from God will discover many mistakes, and especially that it will supply many defects, in the best formed system of natural religion.

From the observations which have now been made, it may be seen, that we ought to be very far from relinquishing our reason, when we come to consider the subject of revelation. On the contrary, then, it is that we ought to make the most use of it, to see that we be not imposed upon in a matter of so much consequence to us. It is only by the help of that faculty which we call *reason*, that we can distinguish between any two systems of religion that may be proposed to us. It is by reason only that we can judge both of their previous probability, and also of the positive evidence that is produced in favour of them. Let us, therefore, upon all occasions, call to our aid that power which God has given us to be the guide of life, and especially in matters of so great importance to us as those certainly are which relate to the will of God, what he requires of us, and what we have to expect from him.

## SECTION IV.

*Rules for estimating the Value of Human Testimony.*

THE plain rules for estimating the value of *single evidences* are the two following :—any thing, capable of being proved by mere testimony, is credible in proportion to the opportunity the witness had of being well informed concerning it himself, and his freedom from any bias that might make him wish to impose upon others. If the person who gives us information concerning any transaction, at which we ourselves were not present, appears to be a competent judge of it, and have been in a situation in which he had the best opportunity of being rightly informed, and if there be no appearance of its being his interest to deceive us, we give our assent ; but we hesitate in proportion to the doubts we entertain on either of these heads.

The *more* persons there are who relate the same transaction, of which they are equally credible witnesses, the stronger is the evidence for it. But the more persons there are through whose hands the *same narration* is conveyed to us, the weaker is the evidence. In this latter case, the witnesses are called *dependent* ones ; but in the former they are said to be *independent*. Whatever imperfection there may be in any one of a number of independent witnesses, it is in part removed by the testimony of others ; but every imperfection in the original evidence is increased in proportion to the number of dependent witnesses through whose hands the same story is transmitted.

The marks of a story being related by a number of independent witnesses, of full credit, is their agreement in the principal articles, and their disagreement with respect to things of less consequence, or at least a variety or diversity in their manner of relating the same story.

The reason of this is, that to things of principal importance they will all equally *attend*, and therefore they will have their minds equally impressed with the ideas of them ; but that to things of less consequence they will not give the same attention, and therefore they will be apt to conceive differently concerning them.

If a number of persons agree very minutely with respect to all the facts of any narrative, general and particular, and also in the order and manner of the narration, it will amount to a proof that they have agreed together to tell the

same story; and in this they will be supposed to have been influenced by some motive not favourable to the value of their testimony; and besides, having learned circumstances one of another, they cannot be considered as independent of one another. All histories which have been written by different persons, in all respects equally credible, agree in the main things, but they are as certainly found to differ with respect to things of less consequence.

We likewise distinguish with respect to the *nature of the fact* to which our assent is required, for we expect more numerous, more express, and in all respects more unexceptionable evidence, according to the degree of its previous improbability, arising from its want of analogy to other facts already known; and in this there is a *gradation*, from things which are antecedently highly probable, and therefore require but little positive evidence, to things which are utterly incredible, being so contrary to what we already know of the course of nature, and the Author of it, that no evidence could convince us of it.

If my servant should tell me that, as he was passing through a certain place, he saw a friend of mine, who, I knew, had business in that neighbourhood, and the character of my servant was such that I had never known him to tell me a wanton lie, I should readily believe him; and if I had any thing to do in the case, I should, without hesitation, act upon the supposition that what he told me was true. But if the same servant should say that, coming through the same place, he saw another of my friends whom I knew to have been dead, I should not believe him, though the thing in itself was ~~not~~ naturally impossible; and if ten or a dozen persons of our common acquaintance, persons of knowledge and curiosity, should, independently of one another, seriously inform me that they were present themselves, and had no doubt of the fact, I might believe it.

It follows, however, from this observation, that miracles require a much stronger testimony than common facts. The latter are analogous to such other facts as are the subject of every day's experience, so that we are continually expecting such things, and they are never any surprise to us; whereas the former are contrary to that analogy, and are therefore unexpected.

By the help of these maxims I shall now proceed to examine the evidence of the Jewish and Christian revelations, shewing how far they are in themselves credible or incre-

dible upon the whole ; then examining the evidence which has been produced in their favour, and lastly considering some particular objections which have been made to them.

## SECTION V.

### *Of the ANTECEDENT CREDIBILITY of the Jewish and Christian Revelations.*

THE belief of the Jewish and Christian revelations, which have so close a connexion that they must stand or fall together,\* is to believe that the Divine Being has, from time to time, interposed in the moral government of the world ; having, upon several important occasions, spoken to mankind by persons called *prophets*, in order to give them information concerning various truths, of the greatest moment to them, and to reclaim them from vice and wickedness ; and that many persons have wrought incontestible miracles, in proof of their having received a commission from God for this purpose.

In the history of the Jewish religion we are informed, that the Divine Being made choice of one particular nation, the posterity of Abraham, by Isaac and Jacob, as the principal medium of his communications to mankind ; making especial provision against their falling into idolatry, and making their temporal prosperity manifestly to depend upon their adherence to his worship.

In the history of the Christian religion, we are informed that, after many predictions, which did, in fact, raise the expectations of the Jewish people, and, in some measure, also, that of the rest of mankind, concerning a very extraordinary person, who should be in a more eminent manner distinguished by God, for the benefit of men, *Jesus Christ* (whose character and history strictly corresponded to those prophetic descriptions) was born in Judea ; that he received from God a power of working miracles, in a more illustrious manner than any other prophet who had gone before him ; that he inculcated the great duties of natural religion in their full extent, with the express promise of a resurrection from the dead, and an everlasting life of happiness, to all

\* Dr. Alexandar Geddes was almost, if not quite singular, as a serious Christian, in rejecting the divine mission of Moses, whom he classes, as a just and politic legislator, with Numa and Lycurgus, exclaiming, in his Verses to Dr. Disauey,

*Mi Jesus Christus legifer unus erit.*

See Mr. Mason Good's Memoirs of Geddes, 1803, pp. 366—373 & 467, 468.

who should believe and obey his doctrine ; and that, after living an irreproachable and most useful life (being a perfect pattern of the most genuine piety and benevolence, and of a proper moderation, without austerity, with respect to all the things of this life), he was put to death by the Jews and Romans ; but that he rose again from the dead on the third day, as he himself had foretold that he should ; and that he ascended to heaven in a visible manner.

We are also informed, in the same history, that, after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, persons appointed by him, with the title of *apostles*, and many others of his disciples, had the power of working miracles in his name ; that, at the risk of every thing that was valuable to them in this life, and of life itself, they preached the gospel ; publishing in all places the history of Jesus Christ (the same that is contained in the books called Gospels) as what they could attest upon their own knowledge ; particularly reciting his doctrines, precepts and promises ; and assuring all men, that he would come again, with a commission from God, to judge the whole race of mankind, according to their works ; when he would most amply reward all the virtuous and good, especially those who had been sufferers in the cause of righteousness and truth, and that he would inflict an adequate punishment on all the wicked.

Lastly, if these histories be true, a very great number both of Jews and Gentiles were, in consequence of this preaching of the gospel, converted to the belief of Christianity ; many of them suffered long and severe persecutions on this account, and even courageously died martyrs to their faith, and Christianity kept continually gaining ground in the world, as Jesus Christ had foretold.

This is a general idea of what is contained in the Jewish and Christian revelations, all the particulars being found in the *Bible*, which is a collection of such books as contain the most authentic account of those revelations ; being written, as is pretended, by men who themselves had received communications from God, and who were witnesses of the most important of those transactions of which they give an account.

Now, before we examine the evidence on which our belief of the particulars which I have now recited rests, it is proper to consider how far the account is in itself *credible* ; by which I now mean, whether it be capable of being proved at all ; and, if it be, what kind of evidence is necessary to procure to it the assent of reasonable and thinking men.

That such a revelation, and miracles in proof of it, are *possible*, cannot, I think, be disputed, since the same Being who made the world, must necessarily have it in his power to interpose in the government of it; and not only to reverse the laws of it, but even to destroy it, if he should think proper. The only question, therefore, is, whether there could be a *sufficient reason*, for such an interposition as has been described. But since *goodness* has been shewn to be the characteristic of the Divine Being, such a revelation must, *a priori*, appear credible, in proportion to its being useful and seasonable. If the state of things before revelation was such as made it highly expedient, at that particular juncture, in exact proportion to that *expediency*, it might even have been expected; and it would have been expected with absolute certainty, by any being who was a proper judge of the real value and seasonableness of it.

Now that such a revelation was in fact highly expedient, has been sufficiently shewn already, in the view which has been given of the state of the heathen world antecedent to it; for without it mankind were actually involved in the grossest ignorance concerning their Maker, and also concerning many important moral duties, and the sanctions of virtue in a future life; and, in consequence of this, they were abandoning themselves, more and more, to the most destructive vices.

That God should suffer his offspring of mankind to fall into so deplorable a situation, is only one branch of the complaint concerning the introduction and prevalence of *evils* in general; and so long as goodness appears, upon the whole, to be the governing principle of the Divine Being, they should lead us to look for, and expect with confidence, a remedy for these and all other evils; and we may assure ourselves, that such a remedy will be provided, as soon as ever these evils shall have answered the benevolent intention of him who has appointed, or permitted them.

So far, therefore, was such a revelation as I have been describing from being incredible, *a priori*, that, since it has been proved to have been highly *desirable*, those of mankind who had a just idea of their situation, and of the character of the Supreme Being, might have been led to expect, or at least to wish for, some extraordinary interposition, to save a sinking world, to restore the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and to provide more effectual sanctions of virtue.

## CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCES OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN  
RELIGIONS, DERIVED FROM TESTIMONY, AND  
ESPECIALLY THAT OF ITS FRIENDS.

### SECTION I.

#### *Of the Authenticity of the Books of Scripture.*

SUCH revelations as the Jewish and Christian, being highly probable, or not unlikely to be true, what we have to do, in order to ascertain their *proper credibility* is, to consider whether the accounts of miracles, said to have been wrought in attestation of them, may be depended upon. In other words, we are to inquire whether the books, which we usually call the *Scriptures*, contain a faithful history of facts. For, if what we there read be true, the Divine Being has unquestionably interposed in the government of the world, and many persons, in proof of it, have worked the most undeniable miracles; having performed such things as no men could have done, except they had been authorized and empowered by him who appointed the laws of nature, and who alone can suspend or controul them.

Now it may be shewn that, according to all the rules of judging concerning the value of testimony, we must admit the truth of these histories, if the books themselves be *genuine*, that is, if they were written by the persons whose names they bear, or in the circumstances in which the contents of them represent them to have been written; if, for instance, the books of Moses were written by Moses; or, which is the same thing with respect to their credibility, if they were written by any person who copied from, or digested what he had written, though they might add some circumstances of later date; or, indeed, if the chief of their contents were written by any person who was contemporary with Moses. The book of Joshua will also be genuine, if it was either written by Joshua himself, by any of his contemporaries, or by any person who lived within a sufficient

time after his death, so as not to be unacquainted with the transactions of which he gives an account. The same observation may be made concerning all the remaining books of the Old Testament, and likewise those of the New; because such persons as the apostles, or their contemporaries, were (as will be shewn at large) in circumstances in which they could not possibly have been imposed upon themselves, and also in which, we cannot reasonably suppose, they could be under the influence of any sufficient motive to attempt to impose upon others.

Now, that the books of Scripture are genuine, we have, in all respects, the same reason to believe as we have to receive any other ancient writings as genuine; as that the books of Homer, for instance, were written by Homer, those of Thucydides by Thucydides, those of Tacitus by Tacitus, or any other of the most celebrated ancient writings by their reputed authors, or their contemporaries. In all these cases, the proof is simply this, that such writings have been quoted, and referred to, as the works of their reputed authors, or their contemporaries, by subsequent writers, without any considerable variation, to the present time. Nay, we have much stronger evidence for the authenticity of the most important of the books of Scripture, than we have for that of any other writings in the world; because they are much oftener quoted, and referred to, in every age, from the very times in which they were written, quite down to the present; which has been owing to nothing but the very great credit they have gained, in consequence of their being considered as of the greatest importance to mankind.

Indeed, so convincing has been the evidence of the authenticity of the books of Scripture, that it has been almost universally allowed, by those who have hated and opposed the system of religion which they contain. Neither the Jews, for instance, nor any early writer among the heathens, who undertook to controvert the principles of Christianity, ever intimated that they had so much as a doubt concerning the genuineness of the books which contain an account of it. The *four gospels* are particularly mentioned by Julian, and a very considerable part of the contents of them are quoted by Celsus.\* Accordingly, these, and other early opposers of Christianity, admit the truth of the history in general, without excepting what is miraculous in it; ascribing these wonderful works either to the agency of some evil

\* See *Celsus* and *Julian*, in Lardner's Works, VIII. pp. 9—18, 58, 62, 65, & 400.

spirit, or endeavouring to account for them in some other manner, in which the interposition of the Divine Being, in favour of Christ and the apostles, might not be necessary.

It affords an argument exceedingly favourable to the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, that they were very soon translated into various foreign languages, and that a multiplicity of copies, both of the originals, and of these translations, were likewise presently dispersed into all parts of the known world, which at that time abounded with men of reading and curiosity; and that all our present copies, both of the originals and of these translations, agree with one another, and with the quotations made by ancient writers from them, in every thing material. We have, therefore, all the reason in the world to conclude, that these books have not been materially corrupted, notwithstanding the *various readings*, and other errors of small consequence, by which all ancient writings have suffered in the same proportion; and which were, indeed, unavoidable, unless every particular transcriber had been prevented by a miracle from making any mistake, which was by no means necessary for any valuable purpose.

It is only upon the *leading facts* in the gospel history that the truth of Christianity is founded; so that if the books of the New Testament come to us in such a state, as to contain a sufficiently credible account of the miracles which Christ wrought, of the doctrines he taught, of his death and resurrection from the dead, and also of the miracles and preaching of the apostles, and the manner in which their doctrine was received by the Jews and Gentiles, at the first promulgation of it, they are quite sufficient to induce us to live and die as becomes Christians, having a full assurance of a future judgment, and of a state of retribution after death. And no corruption of the books of Scripture, designed or undesigned, can be supposed to have vitiated them so much, as not to have left them even far more perfect than this great purpose and use of them requires.

It is also to be observed, that the controversies in which Christians began to be engaged, even before the publication of the books of the New Testament, and especially about that time, and from thence to the present day, are of great moment to establish their authenticity; since the writers in all those controversies constantly appealed to, and expressly quoted the books of Scripture; and in all the writings which are come down to us, we find the texts they quoted, in every thing material, the same as in our present copies, so that, we

may depend upon it, that the principal books of the New Testament are the genuine productions of the persons, and of the age to which they are usually ascribed. And from this it will be made to appear, that they supply a sufficient evidence of the facts on which the Christian history is founded.

The particular testimonies of ancient writers, Christian, Jewish and Heathen, which demonstrate the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, have been produced at full length by Dr. Lardner; and, as it would be too tedious to recite such particulars in this place, I must refer my readers to his most valuable work, intitled, *The Credibility of the Gospel History*. They may assure themselves, however, that, notwithstanding the authenticity of some of the books has been questioned, there never was any doubt with respect to any of them, except to the epistles of James and Jude, the second of Peter, the two small epistles of John, that which is inscribed to the Hebrews, and the book of Revelation. The authority of the four gospels, the book of Acts, and the rest of the epistles, was never called in question. It is true, indeed, that some of the Judaizing Christians having conceived an aversion to St. Paul, had no opinion of his writings, but they were never denied to be his. Also some of the early Christians rejected the genealogy of Christ, and the history of the miraculous conception, as related in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, but they do not appear to have been numerous, nor was their opinion of long continuance. \*

Besides, we are by no means to infer that, because some early Christians rejected any particular *opinion* or *fact* contained in any of the four Evangelists, they did not therefore think them to be the genuine writings of the persons whose names they bear. For though they were satisfied that they wrote those things, they might think them to be *so far* mistaken. We find, in the history of the Acts, that the opinion of a single apostle did not always pass uncontroverted; and with respect to any thing except the leading facts, such as were mentioned above, and which have never yet been questioned by any persons who call themselves Christians, any difference of opinion among the apostles, or others, is of no moment whatever, with respect to the proper evidence of Christianity.

\* It will be seen, in the progress of this edition, that the Author pursuing his inquiries, came, on these points, to a very different conclusion.

With respect, however to all those books of the New Testament, the authenticity of which has been questioned, the arguments in favour of them, are considerably stronger than those against them. It is not certain who was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, but if it was not written by St. Paul, which seems to be the more probable opinion, yet it was certainly written in the apostolical age, and by some person of authority in the Christian Church. The gospel of Matthew, was, perhaps, written in Hebrew, for the benefit of the Jewish converts; but either Matthew himself, or some other person of the same age, must have translated it into Greek, the language in which we now have it; so that, with respect to every thing of importance, it is of the same value as the original Hebrew would have been. The book of *Revelation* was not received in all Christian churches for some time; but afterwards, it gained universal credit, and its authority is now justly considered as of the highest rank. The reasons for which it was disregarded by some are, indeed, sufficiently obvious, and appear to be of no manner of weight, as they arose chiefly from the doctrine of the *millenium*, of which some ancient heretics were thought to avail themselves too much.

There can be no doubt but that the canon of the Old Testament was the same in the time of our Saviour as it is now; nor could it have been corrupted materially after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, on account of the sect of the Samaritans, which took its rise about that time. For these people professed the same regard to the sacred books with the Jews themselves, and were always at variance with them about the interpretation of the Scriptures. The Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch is now in our hands, and excepting some *numbers*, in which the different copies and translations of all ancient writings are peculiarly subject to vary, and a single text, in which mount *Gerizim* and mount *Ebal* are interchanged, it is the very same with the Jewish copy. Not long after this, the books of the Old Testament, beginning with the Pentateuch, were translated into Greek, and dispersed, by means of the Jews, into almost every part of the known world.

There is not the least probability that any change, worth any men's attempting to make, or in the least affecting any principal point of the Jewish religion, was made during their captivity; which, however, was not long, reckoning from the time of the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, but that many of those who returned from it had a perfect

remembrance of the temple of Solomon, which had been burned in the siege by Nebuchadnezzar ; for they wept when they saw how much the new temple was inferior to it ; and can it be supposed but that some of these people would have taken the alarm, and a schism have been occasioned, if any material change had been attempted to be made in the constitution of the law, or the contents of the sacred books.

Least of all can it be supposed that Ezra would, at that particular time, have introduced the injunction on which he laid so much stress, about putting away all their strange wives. In his circumstances this measure must have appeared exceedingly hazardous, considering how many persons, even among the priests themselves, had contracted such marriages, how considerable they were by their birth and alliances, and, consequently, how many enemies the Jews would thereby make themselves. We find, in fact, that this measure did meet with the most violent opposition, produced a lasting division among themselves, and made them incur the hatred and ill offices of all their neighbours. Besides, since many of the priests, who must have known as much of the law of Moses as Ezra himself, were highly exasperated at this proceeding, they would never have suffered him to publish that as one of the laws of Moses, which they knew to be a mere forgery.

If we go farther back into the Jewish history, we shall still be unable to pitch upon any time in which any material change in the sacred books could have been attempted, with the least prospect of success. It was one of the most earnest instructions of Moses himself, that the book of the law, a copy of which was lodged in the ark, should be the subject of constant reading and meditation in every Israelitish family ; and it was expressly appointed that it should be read publicly every seven years, at the feast of Tabernacles, Deut. xxxi. 9, 13 ; and the Levites, who were dispersed through all the twelve tribes, were particularly appointed to study and to explain it to the rest of the nation ; and notwithstanding the times of defection and idolatry, they were never intirely without prophets, and even many thousands of others, who continued firm in the worship of the true God, and therefore must have retained their regard to the sacred books of the Law.

As to the alarm of King Josiah and his court, on finding a copy of the Law in the temple, it may be accounted for many ways better than upon the supposition of that being

the first copy of all, either imposed upon the king, or imposed by him upon the people ; neither of which could possibly have been effected. It is not improbable, but that this particular copy might have been the original one, which had been taken out of the ark, and mislaid, in some former idolatrous reign ; and the passages which they read might contain some awful denunciations against idolatry, to which they had given but little attention before. Whatever we may conjecture with respect to this particular fact, it can never be thought in the least probable, that a nation so prone to idolatry as the Israelites were, from the time of their settlement in the land of Canaan to the Babylonish captivity, should either forge, or not detect and expose the forgery of books pretending to so high authority, and so hostile to their favourite propensity.

Upon the whole, the Jews have, no doubt, acted the part of most faithful and even scrupulous guardians of their sacred books, for the use of all the world, in the times of Christianity. After the last of their prophets, Malachi, they admitted no more books into their canon, so as to permit them to be read in their synagogues, though they were written by the most eminent men in their nation ; it being a maxim with them, that no book could be entitled to a place in the canon of their Scriptures, unless it was written by a prophet, or a person who had had communication with God.

That the Scriptures of the Old Testament have not been materially corrupted by the Jews since the promulgation of Christianity, notwithstanding it is thought that, out of enmity to Christianity they attempted it in a few passages, (though it was more with respect to the Septuagint Greek than the original Hebrew,) is evident from the many prophecies still remaining in their Scriptures, concerning the humiliation and sufferings of the Messiah, in which the Christians always triumphed when they disputed with the Jews. These passages, therefore, we may assure ourselves, would have been the first that the Jews would have practised upon, if it had been in their power, or in their inclination to do it.

All the books of Scripture have also many internal marks of their being the genuine production of the ages in which they are said to have been written, as they contain so many allusions to particular persons, places, opinions and customs, which are known, from other allowed histories, to have existed in those times ; and the historical incidents which the sacred writers occasionally mention, are sufficiently agreeable

to other authentic accounts ; the variations being no greater than such as are to be found in other genuine histories of the same period. This branch of the evidence of Christianity has also been particularly illustrated by Dr. Lardner.

## SECTION II.

### *Of the Evidence from Testimony in favour of the Christian Revelation.*

TAKING it for granted that the books of Scripture are the genuine productions of the persons and times to which they are usually ascribed, I shall proceed to consider the value of the evidence which they contain, for those facts, on which the truth of the Jewish and Christian religions depend, beginning with the latter.

We find in the books of the New Testament, and especially the four *Evangelists*, and the book of *Acts*, not only that twelve persons who are called *apostles*, but that thousands of others were witnesses of a continued course of miracles performed by Jesus Christ, during the whole course of his ministry ; especially that he was actually put to death, and that great numbers of persons had the most satisfactory evidence that he rose again from the dead, as he himself had foretold. These were persons who had attended upon him constantly, and had had the fairest opportunity of inquiring into the truth of the facts. Many of these witnesses of the miracles of Christ were *strangers*, and others were his most inveterate *enemies* ; who, notwithstanding this, could not deny but that he performed many real miracles, though they ascribed some of them to the agency of evil spirits.

The miracles of Christ were of so great notoriety, that Peter, addressing himself to the body of the Jews at Jerusalem, within a short time after the resurrection, had no occasion to produce any particular witnesses of them ; but, without being contradicted by any person, appealed to the whole body of the people present, as having already the fullest conviction concerning them : Acts ii. 22. St. Paul, also, when he had an audience of King Agrippa, appealed to his own knowledge and conviction, saying, that the things were *not done in a corner* : Acts xxvi. 26.

Even the friends and disciples of Christ were only those who were made so by the evidence of his miracles, and his excellent doctrine, and who must have come to him with strong prejudices, against his being the person that he pre-

tended to be, and against his being possessed of those extraordinary powers which they saw him exert. Had he even performed all that they expected from the Messiah, the obscurity of his birth, and his passing for a Galilean, were sufficient, we find, to make many persons conclude without farther inquiry, that he must be an impostor. All the Jews, however, even the most intelligent and the most virtuous of them, expected nothing less than a temporal prince, who should assert the freedom of the Jews, and the empire of the world. Nothing, therefore, but the strongest evidence of his having a Divine commission, can be supposed to have induced them to receive him in that character, after he had peremptorily declined all kingly honours, and especially, after his sufferings and death.

When Christ was actually put to death, we see that his most intimate companions forsook him and fled; and considering the damp which was thrown upon all the views and expectations of the apostles by the ignominious death of their Master, their re-assembling so soon afterwards, and undertaking, in the face of the greatest opposition, to preach the doctrine of their Master, and gain converts to the belief of his Divine mission, cannot be accounted for, but upon the supposition of their having received the fullest conviction that he rose from the dead, and had authorized them to preach in his name.

So incredulous were the disciples of Christ with respect to the truth of his resurrection, though it was what he himself had expressly foretold, that Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, declared, even after he was informed of it by the rest (who assured him that they themselves had lately seen and conversed with him), that he could not believe the fact, unless he should actually handle and examine his wounds; and yet even this man did afterwards receive the fullest satisfaction.

That so many of the Jewish nation should have been converted to Christianity by the preaching of the apostles, is such a fact as cannot be accounted for but upon the supposition of their having received the most satisfactory evidence with respect to the resurrection of Christ, and the power with which the apostles were invested to work miracles in his name.

The whole nation of the Jews are to this day, and, according to all the accounts that we have of them, they ever have been the most obstinate and incredulous of all mankind, and therefore the last people in the world to convince or per-

suade ; and they must have been more especially so in such a case as this, where their most favourite prejudices were directly opposed. They must, therefore, have been the least liable to have been imposed upon, and the most unexceptionable witnesses that can be thought of for this purpose.

No reasonable motive can be assigned for the astonishing *perseverance* of the apostles, and other primitive Christians, in preaching the gospel, bearing all hardships, and even undergoing death for the sake of it, but the most firm persuasion of their having a reward in heaven ; and how could they have come by that firm persuasion, but in consequence of having received the clearest evidence of miracles, in favour of the pretensions and power of Christ ?

That a few persons might have had their heads turned, and have acted in an absurd and unaccountable manner, may be supposed ; but unless human nature was constituted in a manner quite different from what we see and experience at present, (which would be much more extraordinary than any thing that the scheme of revelation requires us to believe,) it can never be supposed that *so many* persons as actually incurred reproach and persecution, even unto death, for the sake of the gospel, at the first promulgation of it, should, all of them, for so long a course of time, have been so infatuated, as to risk and abandon every thing, without a well-grounded hope of a sufficient recompense, that is, without a rational conviction concerning the resurrection and power of Christ.

Besides, they all of them pretended to some *miraculous gift*, and cannot be supposed to have continued to act the part which they did through life, without a consciousness of their having, and exerting such miraculous powers on proper occasions.

If the heads of the apostles and other primitive Christians had been turned by the most preposterous ambition, and they had meant nothing farther than to make themselves conspicuous in the world, it can hardly be supposed but that some of them, at least, would have thought of setting up for themselves, and that the ablest among them would have endeavoured to make tools of the rest. On the contrary, there is not the least appearance of any one of them endeavouring to assume authority over the rest ; but they persist through life, as brothers and fellow-labourers, in their allegiance to their crucified Lord, referring all their mighty works to his power and spirit.

With this humility and perfect harmony they preached

the religion of their Master, not only when they were together, but when they were separated from one another, in very distant countries ; where, if what they performed were mere *tricks of their own*, they had an opportunity of establishing themselves independently of one another. Even the apostle Paul, who preached the gospel without conferring with any of the other apostles, pursued the same conduct, engaging in the very same persecuted interest, and promoting it by the very same methods.

This unambitious conduct of the apostles is the more remarkable, as, before the crucifixion of Christ, some of them appeared to be of a different character, eagerly aspiring after worldly honours, and ambitious of pre-eminence over their brethren. This, and other remarkable changes in their disposition and conduct after the death of Christ, and especially their suddenly taking courage to preach the gospel in the face of the greatest dangers, immediately after their cowardly desertion of their Master, and after a catastrophe which entirely overturned all their fond hopes and expectations from him, are easily accounted for on the hypothesis of their having been *endued with power from on high*, on the day of Pentecost, but are inexplicable, on the known principles of human nature, without such an hypothesis.

Christians, even in the times of the apostles, were divided into various sects and parties, and the contention was carried on with great heat and animosity among them, some of them opposing the apostles themselves. Now, had any of them been but suspected of contriving or conniving at a fraud, with respect to the foundation of the religion they professed, it could not, in those circumstances, but have been detected and exposed. Yet, in arguing with these divided Christians, the apostle Paul scruples not to appeal to miracles wrought among them, and even by them, and gives particular directions about the most proper use of the supernatural gifts of which they were possessed. In these circumstances, how could he have written in this manner, if he had been sensible that no such miracles had been wrought, and no such supernatural gifts possessed either by himself or them ?

That the apostles and primitive Christians could not expect to make any lasting advantage of their imposture, admitting that their ruling passion was the ambition of being the founders of a new religion, may be argued from this consideration, that for some time they universally expected

the second coming of Christ, to put an end to the world, in that very generation.\*

If Christ and his apostles were not the weakest of all enthusiasts, which their whole conduct shews them not to have been, they could not but know whether they were inspired of God, and had a power of speaking and acting in his name, or not. Now that men of virtue should pretend to act from God, at the same time that they knew that they had no such commission, cannot be supposed. It follows, therefore, that, not being gross and weak enthusiasts, they could not be under an illusion themselves; and being good men, friends of virtue, and shewing the most genuine marks of an unfeigned reverence for God, and for truth, they would not attempt to impose upon others.

That the apostles were men possessed of the greatest cunning, so as to conduct, with ability and success, all the parts of so complex an imposture, and which required so many agents of ability equal to their own, and that at the same time they were dupes to the grossest illusions, are contradictory suppositions. To a certain degree, indeed, there may be a mixture of artifice and enthusiasm; and therefore men may be deceived themselves, and endeavour to deceive others. But the *degree* in which it is necessary, for the purpose of infidelity, that these two opposite qualities should be found in Christ and his apostles, and in all those who must necessarily have been in the same scheme, is absolutely impossible, while human nature is what it is; and no example of any thing approaching to it can be found in the history of mankind.

Most of the preceding arguments are peculiarly strong with respect to St. Paul. He had been an inveterate enemy and persecutor of the Christians, a man of great ability, learning, activity and influence with the leading men of his country; so that he had every thing in this world to expect from his opposition to Christianity, and nothing but persecution, ignominy, or almost certain death, from embarking in that cause. Yet, notwithstanding this, he suddenly, and without discovering any marks of insanity, or giving any instance of absurdity of conduct in other respects, preached that doctrine which he had opposed, and continued in it to the end of a laborious and painful life, which terminated in a bloody death.

How this can be accounted for, excepting in the manner

\* See Nisbet's Dissertation on this subject.

in which he himself explains it, is to me impossible to conceive. But upon his hypothesis every thing is perfectly easy. He says that Christ spake to him in person, to convince him of his error, and of the folly of his pursuits, after he had been thrown down from his horse, by the flashing of a supernatural light, as he was on his road to Damascus. And this fact is itself extremely probable, from the circumstances of it.

This was not in the night time, when apparitions are commonly pretended to be seen, but at mid-day; not when he was alone, and his mind subject to a sudden panic, or fit of remorse, but in company; and not in the company of Christians, or of those who saw and heard enough to make them become Christians, but of inveterate enemies to Christianity, probably his favourite companions, and who, when they were afterwards appealed to, could not contradict the facts, of the extraordinary light, and the sound of a voice, though they could not distinguish the *words*; nor could they deny that he was actually struck blind. He was confirmed in the truth of what he was informed of in this vision by recovering his sight, as Christ at the same time foretold, on the prayer of Ananias, who baptized him.

The treachery of Judas Iscariot affords a striking evidence of the innocent character and Divine mission of Christ. Circumstanced as this traitor was, and disposed as he must have been, he would certainly have given information of any sinister design of Christ, if he had known of any such thing; and he had the same means of information as the rest of the apostles. His hanging himself\* was natural enough, as the effect of extreme agony and remorse of mind, after so base a piece of treachery, but altogether unaccountable upon the supposition that, by telling the truth only, he might have gained a considerable reward, and at the same time have established himself in the esteem of his country, by exposing an impostor, who was the object of general odium, and especially with those who had the chief influence in public affairs.

Upon the whole, it cannot, I think, but be allowed, that the testimony that is given to the history and miracles of Christ, of which we have an account in the books of the New Testament, is the testimony of men who were competent witnesses in the case; having had the fairest oppor-

\* See the Author's *Notes*, V. iii. S. lxxxiv. For a different view of the manner of Judas's death, see Dr. Mead's *Medica Sacra*, Ch. xiv. and Wakefield's *St. Matthew*, pp. 384, 387, 388.

tunity of satisfying themselves concerning the facts, and who had no motive, that we can imagine, for imposing upon the world with respect to them.

Besides the evidence of the Divine mission of Christ which arises from the testimony to the reality of his *miracles*, by those who saw and conversed with him, and the tacit acknowledgement of all his contemporaries, we have (on the authority of the same historians) the evidence which arises from the testimony of another prophet, whose claim to a Divine communication was allowed by almost the whole body of the Jewish nation, and even the testimony of God himself, declared in supernatural voices from heaven.

The testimony of John the Baptist is of considerable importance to the evidence of Christianity. The circumstances which attended his birth were very extraordinary, and excited great expectations concerning him. He led a remarkably austere life, without any connexion with the world, or its affairs, and had no personal knowledge of Jesus, though they were related. By his exemplary virtue he so far gained the esteem and confidence of the body of the Jews, that the most bigotted and envious of the Pharisees and chief priests, notwithstanding their authority with the people, durst not say in public that he was no prophet. He even died a martyr to his integrity and fidelity, in reproving King Herod.

This remarkable person did not pretend to work miracles, but solemnly declared that he was commissioned to preach the doctrine of repentance, by way of preparation for the coming of the Messiah; and he also solemnly declared that he knew Jesus to be the person by some visible token attending the descent of the spirit of God upon him; by which, he says, it was foretold to him, that he should be able to distinguish the person to whose mission his own was subordinate. Notwithstanding the great credit which John acquired, equal, if not superior to that of any of the former Jewish prophets, he did not pretend to set up for himself, but constantly referred his disciples to Jesus, when they were zealously attached to him, and jealous of the rising reputation of the new prophet.

Christ was also declared to be the son and messenger of God, by miraculous voices from heaven; the first of these was pronounced immediately upon his baptism, probably in the hearing of great numbers; the second on the mount of transfiguration, when only three of his disciples were present; and the third in the temple, in the hearing of a pro-

miscuous multitude, of whom some, who were at a distance, thought that it thundered, and others said that an angel spake to him. See Luke iii. 22. Matt. xvii. 5. John xii. 28.

To these three different kinds of evidence, namely, that of his works, of John the Baptist, and of God his Father, as well as to that of ancient prophecies, Jesus himself appeals in his conversation with the Jews. John v. 31, &c.

Some persons seem to be surprised that we find so little in favour of Christianity in the writings of Jews and Heathens, who lived about the time of its promulgation. But how can it be supposed that men should speak very favourably of a religion which they did not choose to embrace? Besides, Christianity has all that testimony which can possibly be had from adversaries. It would be highly unreasonable to expect that Jews or Heathens, continuing such, should expressly acknowledge their belief of the resurrection of Christ; but they acknowledge what is a sufficient ground of *our* belief, namely, that the disciples of Christ declared that he did rise from the dead, and that they professed to have seen and conversed with him after his resurrection. This is particularly done by Celsus, and the Emperor Julian.

Such facts as these being admitted, we are certainly at liberty to reason from them as well as they. The earlier Jews ascribed some of the miracles of Christ to the power of Beelzebub, and many of the later Jews to the secret virtue of some *ineffable name of God*, which they pretend that he stole from the temple, or to some arts of sorcery, which they conceit that he learned in Egypt; but, the miraculous works of Christ being allowed, we are certainly at liberty to laugh at such hypotheses as these, and may think that we act more reasonably in ascribing them to the power of God only.

Besides, Christianity has the testimony of thousands, who, having been bitter enemies, became converts to it, on farther examination; and these are, in fact, the most valuable of all testimonies. • Indeed, all the early converts to Christianity, the apostles themselves not excepted, may be considered as belonging to this class; because they had strong prejudices to overcome before they could entertain the thought of such a Messiah as Jesus was.

It were to be wished that unbelievers of the present age would carefully consider the evidences which were alleged in favour of Christianity by Christ and his apostles themselves, as they are proposed in the Gospels, and the book of Acts, and endeavour to account for them. Let them par-

ticularly consider the objections that were made to them by the unbelievers of those days, and observe what it was which they then took for granted, and let them consider whether, at this day, they can reasonably take less for granted; or, putting themselves in the place of their predecessors, whether they can, in any other respect, make any improvement on their reasonings. If their objections to Christianity were really weak and insufficient, their conduct must be condemned, even by modern unbelievers, who must acknowledge that, with their views of things, they ought to have become Christians.

Now it is well known that all the early adversaries of Christianity, Jews and Gentiles, not only allowed the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, but also admitted that miracles were really wrought by Christ and his apostles, as an evidence of their having a Divine commission. And it may be presumed that men who were so much interested in detecting the imposture of Christianity, as the high priests and rulers among the Jews, and also as the Heathen priests, philosophers and magistrates, (some of whom immediately, and all of whom very soon took alarm at the spread of Christianity, being in the highest degree exasperated at it,) and who had every possible opportunity for examining the credentials of Christ and his apostles, would have taken the most effectual methods to prevent the growth of a religion that was so exceedingly offensive to them; and they must, no doubt, have been sensible, that the most effectual method would be to remove what the Christians themselves alleged to be the foundation of their faith, namely, the credibility of their miracles, which they asserted to have been wrought, and to be at that very time wrought in its favour. And it appears from the Gospels, and the book of Acts, that the enemies of Christianity did give the closest attention to the miracles of Christ and his apostles, and not being able to question their reality, they had recourse to such hypotheses to account for them, as any unbeliever of the present age would be ashamed of.

Had Christianity given no alarm in Judea at the time when it was first proposed, or had the Heathen philosophers and magistrates taken no notice of it till after the death of the apostles, the evidence of the truth of Christianity would not have had the strength which it now has, from considering that Christ himself was so obnoxious to the Jewish rulers, that they put him to death, and that so violent a persecution was raised against the disciples of Christ, beginning with the

very year of his ascension, that only one of the apostles, and hardly any other person of much eminence among the Christians, died a natural death, but died martyrs to their religion, and that all the primitive Christians, without exception, suffered very great hardships.

The various circumstances which concur to authenticate the miracles of Christ, and the apostles, are well collected into one view by Dr. Jortin, and with it I shall conclude this section. "They were wrought by persons who solemnly appealed to God, and who often declared that they would perform them. They were wrought in a public manner, before enemies and unbelievers, in a learned age, and civilized countries, not with any air of ostentation, or for the sake of worldly advantage, but in confirmation of precepts and doctrines agreeable to reason and useful to mankind, and at a time when their enemies wanted neither power nor inclination to expose them if they had been impostures, and were in no danger either of being insulted by the populace, or persecuted by the civil magistrates for ridiculing the Christians.

"These miracles were also various and numerous; they were of a permanent nature, and might be reviewed and re-examined; they had nothing fantastical or cruel in them, but were acts of kindness and beneficence. Miracles having ceased for a long time before Christ appeared, the revival of them raised the greater attention. They were attested by proper witnesses, were acknowledged by adversaries, were foretold by the prophets, and such as the Jews expected from the Messiah, and actually converted multitudes."

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Considerations on the RESURRECTION of Christ, and other Facts of a similar Nature.*

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact of such particular consequence to the truth of Christianity, and is so remarkably circumstanced with respect to its evidence, that it well deserves a distinct consideration. To this fact our Lord himself had appealed, as one considerable evidence of his Divine mission; and though he spake figuratively when he gave his enemies warning of it, it is plain that he was sufficiently understood by them. For no sooner was he dead and laid in the sepulchre, than the chief priests and rulers of the Jews informed the Roman governor concerning it; and, to prevent any possibility of their being imposed

upon by his disciples' stealing the body, and pretending that he had risen from the dead, they obtained a guard of Roman soldiers to watch the sepulchre continually; and lest the soldiers themselves should have been bribed, or, by any other method have been gained over by the disciples, to connive at their scheme of conveying away the body, they fixed a seal to a very large stone, which covered the mouth of the sepulchre.

Having used these precautions, which seem to have been all that human prudence could have dictated, they, no doubt, concluded that, if the disciples should make any attempt to break the sepulchre, they could not but have been observed and prevented; or if the disciples should have brought an armed force, sufficient to overpower the Roman guard, at least some resistance would have been made; and the carrying off the body by *violence* could have answered no purpose whatever; so that, upon the whole, they might rest assured, that if the body was not found when they came to inspect the sepulchre, the removal must have been effected either by a miracle, or in such a manner as could not answer the purpose of any imposture.

The event was, that the body was removed from the sepulchre, on the day on which Christ had foretold that he should rise from the dead, and this happened very early in the morning, so that very probably, it was not long after the watch had been changed the third time that night.

Let us now examine whether the account which the disciples of Christ, or that which the Jews gave of this event, is the more probable. The apostles, who might have had the account from some of the guard, say that, just before the body was removed, there was a great earthquake, and an angel of God came and rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, and sat upon it; that his raiment was white as snow, and his whole appearance particularly bright and dazzling, so that the soldiers were seized with extreme fear, and became as dead men.

Upon this they all dispersed, and some of them went into the city, and told the high priests all that had passed; but they immediately assembling together, with the other rulers of the Jews, gave money to these soldiers, making them promise to give out that, while they slept, the disciples of Christ stole his body, and assuring them, that they would take care that the Roman governor should not punish them for their negligence. Accordingly they did what was required of them, and, no doubt, endeavoured to engage all

their companions to tell the same story. But it is not improbable, but that some of them might, in the mean time, have told the truth ; and other circumstances, and a variety of subsequent evidence, unquestionably prove that there had been a real resurrection.

The angel was still sitting upon the stone, about break of day, where he was seen by Mary Magdalene, and some other women, who had come with a design to embalm the body, and had brought spices with them for that purpose, not having any expectation of his rising again ; but being informed of it by the angel, they went in haste to acquaint his disciples with it. Two of these, Peter and John, immediately ran to the sepulchre, which they found open, and the body gone ; but, instead of any marks of a violent removal, they found the grave-clothes carefully folded up, and laid in separate places, so that some think the body must have miraculously slipped out of them. However, it is not at all probable, that they would have been left behind, and especially so carefully folded, and so regularly disposed, if the body had been removed by violence or stealth.

That Christ should rise again from the dead, was perfectly agreeable to the tenour of his former life, and a proper sequel to it ; but the more substantial evidence of it is, his having been frequently seen by, and having intimately conversed with his former disciples, whose account of it exhibits, in a most natural manner, their surprise and joy on the occasion of so agreeable, but so unexpected an event. Besides, all the miracles that were wrought by the apostles afterwards, the evidence of which is no less convincing than that of the miracles of Christ himself, and wholly independent of it, are all so many proofs of his resurrection ; for they are plainly parts of a great scheme, which necessarily supposes that most important event.

Let us now attend to some circumstances which shew the extreme improbability of the account which the Jews gave of the removal of the body of Jesus, which is that which the Christian writers say they put into the mouths of the soldiers above-mentioned. It is evident, from all the circumstances of the history, that the disciples of Christ were too much disconcerted and disheartened by the unexpected death of their Master (which entirely destroyed all the hopes which they had entertained from him) to think of making any attempt to remove his body ; or if they could have removed, and effectually secreted it, what end

could that have answered, without powers to carry on the scheme?

But the scheme of conveying away the body *by stealth*, must have appeared the most improbable of all, as it was necessary for this purpose that every soldier of the guard should not only have been found sleeping at the same time, but so sound asleep, that the removal of a stone, which several women despaired of being able to stir, should not awaken any of them, and that they should all have slept long enough to give them an opportunity both of removing the stone, and taking off the clothes and spices in which the body was wrapped; and those who are acquainted with the manner in which the Jews prepared the bodies of their dead for sepulture, say that this must have required a considerable time; more, indeed, than it can be imagined that persons who had stolen the body would have ventured to employ; and lastly, they must also have had time to carry away the body undiscovered.

This was also to be done upon a hill, so near the city of Jerusalem, that it is now inclosed within the walls of it,\* when the moon was at the full, and at the time of passover, when both Jerusalem itself, and all the neighbouring places must have been crowded with people from all parts of Judea.

It adds to the improbability of this story, that the discipline of the Roman soldiers is known to have been exceedingly strict; so that they must all of them have expected either death or some severe punishment for sleeping upon watch: nor could they have expected any mercy in this case; least of all could they imagine that the Jewish rulers would interpose in their favour, when it was at their particular request that the guard was obtained, and they were so much interested in the watch being strictly kept; and yet no punishment followed upon the occasion, which amounts to a full proof that the Jewish rulers were convinced that the soldiers had done all that could be expected of them.

If it be asked how the soldiers could be brought to fall into the measures of the Jewish rulers, and so readily to tell the lie which they put into their mouths, it may be answered, that, in the terror and consternation they were in, and afraid of punishment, they might be glad to do any thing they were directed to do, especially upon the promise of impunity and a reward. They might be satisfied that

\* It was visited and thus described, by *Sandys*, in 1611. See his *Travels*, 1673, 7th Ed. p. 123.

Pilate and their Roman officers would believe nothing of their account of the appearance of an angel, and the miraculous removing of the stone, (and they saw nothing more,) and they could not pretend that they had been overpowered, when they returned without any marks of having made resistance. Improbable, therefore, as the story was, they might think it the best thing they could do in their circumstances, to tell it. It is not unlikely, however, that, reflecting upon the affair afterwards, and hearing the testimony of the apostles to the truth of the resurrection, some of them, at least, might be convinced of it, and give a faithful account of all that they knew concerning it.

If the disciples of Christ had really stolen his body, in the circumstances above-mentioned, it is very extraordinary that the Jews should never have pretended to produce, at least, one positive evidence of the fact. If it had been possible, they would, no doubt, have found somebody, who would have declared that they saw the disciples of Christ in the act of removing the stone, of taking or carrying away the body, or something which they might suppose to be the body; or that some persons, supposed to be the disciples, might have been doing something of this kind, about that time, and near the proper place. We may be satisfied, therefore, that there was no circumstance of this kind of which the Jewish rulers could hope to avail themselves, in order to strengthen their assertion of the body having been stolen.

When the apostles, presently after this, appeared publicly in Jerusalem, preaching the gospel, and boldly asserting the resurrection of Christ, do the Jewish rulers behave to them as men whom they could convict of a notorious cheat? Nay, they were so far from venturing to charge them with any such thing, that they only punished and threatened them, insisting that they should say no more of the matter. Would the Orator Tertullus have missed so fine a topic of declamation, had there been the least colour of truth in this story, when, before King Agrippa, he was bitterly inveighing against Paul, who affirmed that Jesus was alive, when the Jews said that he was dead? Or could Gamaliel, one of the most eminent of the Jewish doctors, have possibly supposed that the hand of God *might* be with the apostles, and have given the advice which he did upon that occasion, if he had known that a cheat had been discovered with respect to the resurrection; or would the whole Sanhedrim have so readily followed his advice, upon that supposition?

Lastly, it may be observed, as a proof of the extreme futility of this story, that the only Evangelist who mentions it, makes no attempt to refute it, seeming to regard it as a thing that was palpably false, and sufficiently known to be so.

Upon the whole, it seems to be hardly possible, that the circumstances attending the resurrection of Christ, or the promulgation of the gospel, which was consequent upon it, could have been better adapted to gain the full conviction of the world in general, and especially in distant ages. The ingenuity of man may fancy a resurrection, and the promulgation of such a religion as the Christian, so circumstanced as, *it may be thought*, would have produced a greater effect ; but it does not seem difficult to demonstrate, that any alteration which has yet been suggested for this purpose, would have been unfavourable to the real weight of the evidence.

It has been said, that Christ ought to have made his appearance to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, in full assembly, and have appeared as publicly after, as he had done before his resurrection. But admitting that this had been the case, I doubt not but the same obdurate minds, which were not conciliated, but more exasperated against him after their being themselves witnesses of the resurrection of Lazarus, and all the other miracles of Christ, would only have been rendered still more inveterate by any other miracles, wrought in favour of a person, who would have done no more than he did in a temporal respect. Besides, it is plain, that they actually had *sufficient* evidence of the resurrection of Christ, which is all that can reasonably be required, and yet did not become Christians.

Admitting, however, that the consequence of Christ's appearing in this public manner had been the conversion of the body of the Jewish nation, and of such strangers as should have happened to have been residing at Jerusalem, or in Judea, at that time ; would it not have been said, by the unbelievers of this remote age, that the rulers of the Jews and the Roman governor were in the secret ; and that, having the management of the whole affair, they could easily make out the story of a resurrection, or any thing else, which they might have thought better suited to answer their purpose ; and that all the prophecies which speak of a suffering Messiah, had been undoubtedly forged by them ? These things might easily have been said, even in the same age, and at no greater distance than Rome, and much more

plausibly than many things that are objected to Christianity, at this day.

Had Christ himself, after such an event, made his appearance in Rome, accompanied by a solemn deputation of the Jewish elders, he would probably have been treated with ridicule, as the people of Rome might have said that he had never been dead. But let us farther admit, that the Roman emperor, his court, all the chief men in the empire, and the bulk of the people, in that age had embraced Christianity, and consequently that no Christian had been persecuted to death for his religion, how would the thing have looked at this distance? Would it not have been said by sceptical people, that it had all the marks of a scheme of worldly policy, and that all the great men of those times had agreed to frame a better kind of religion, when the old systems were worn out? They would have said, that there was nobody in those times who had properly inquired into the truth of the facts, or that all the contrary evidence had been suppressed, and that the rapid progress of the new religion was the effect of worldly encouragement.

Had the witnesses of the resurrection been, not the whole Jewish nation, but a number of persons of high rank in life, it might have been said, that they had availed themselves of their power and influence with the people, to gain credit to their scheme.

At present, the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, and of all the great events on which the truth of Christianity is founded, are such as shew that the wisdom of God is superior to that of men, being the most unexceptionable that could have been thought of. They were men of middling circumstances, neither desperate through poverty on the one hand, nor peculiarly within the influence of ambition, on the other. They were men of plain understandings, neither so weak as to have been easily imposed upon, nor so cunning and crafty, as to have had it in their power to impose upon others. They were men of such irreproachable characters, as to afford the least possible suspicion of such a design. They were also in sufficient numbers.

Such men as these were induced, by the evidence of what they saw and heard, in favour of the doctrines and pretensions of Christ, to act counter to the strongest prejudices to which mankind can be subject; they risked every thing that was valuable to them, their ease, their honest reputation, their little fortunes, and their lives. Having been men of low occupations and timid natures, they boldly preached

the doctrine of their Master, notwithstanding the most determined opposition from all the powers of the world ; and, perhaps, what is the hardest trial of all, they were every where exposed to the greatest ridicule and insult. In these circumstances was Christianity professed through the whole Roman empire, for the space of three hundred years. \*

What considerably strengthens this evidence, with respect to the world at large, is, that the Jews are still the inveterate enemies of Christianity, so that they cannot be suspected of having ever acted in concert with Christians ; but should they be gained over even at present, or in any period of time before the gospel shall have been sufficiently preached through the whole world, it might have an unfavourable aspect with respect to those nations who should not then be converted, or their remote posterity—so important a circumstance to the evidence of Christianity is the general *unbelief of the Jews* ; agreeable to the ideas of the apostle Paul, *He hath shut them up in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.*

On the other hand, when the gospel shall have been sufficiently preached through the whole world, the general conversion of the Jews, and their restoration to their own country, after being so long a dispersed, but a distinct people (which is the subject of so many prophecies), will be such an additional confirmation of the truth of the whole system of revelation, as perhaps no force of prejudice will be able to resist. Of such importance to the whole world will be the extraordinary providence which has attended, and which still attends this people.

Lastly, the very great corruptions of Christianity have been the occasion of many persons abandoning it, and writing against it, in this learned and inquisitive age ; by which means, the evidences of it have stood such a test as no scheme of religion was ever put to before ; and yet, instead of appearing to disadvantage under the severe scrutiny, this trial has been a means of purging it from its many corruptions ; men of the greatest virtue, learning, and diligent inquiry, and even many of those who have the least worldly interest in promoting the belief of it, are its steadiest friends ; and its enemies are generally such persons as have manifestly never given sufficient attention to the subject, or have not had a competent share of learning to qualify them

\* See "The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus." 6th Ed. 1731, *passim*.

to judge for themselves ; and it is also notorious that very many of them are men of profligate lives and characters, whose minds must, therefore, be unfavourably disposed with respect to the evidences of Christianity ; so that they must be exceedingly biassed, and consequently, very incompetent judges in the case.

Besides, the things that modern unbelievers cavil at are, generally, trifling circumstances, many of which a better translation of an obscure passage in the books of Scripture sufficiently obviates ; or else they are levelled not against what Christianity really is, but what it has been supposed to be, in ignorant and corrupt ages ; and no unbeliever has pretended to detect the imposture of Christianity in the same manner in which other impostures have been detected, namely, by sufficient historical evidence ; nor have they at all accounted for the rise and propagation of it, on the supposition of its being false.

Upon the whole, it does not appear to me that the wisdom of man could have devised the circumstances of a miraculous history, so as to make it so truly credible as that of the gospel is. If those who are now the most ingenious of its adversaries had had the choice of the circumstances, and had prescribed them *a priori*, it is very probable that they might have been so ill adapted to the end, that the belief of it would have failed, in the natural course of things, long before this time ; whereas, as things are now circumstanced, the original evidence is so admirably adjusted, as to be sufficient without any new revelation to establish the Christian faith, perhaps, to the end of the world ; and this consideration certainly furnishes a strong additional evidence of the truth of Christianity, and also serves to give us a striking idea of the wisdom of God, and the weakness of man.

## SECTION V.

### *Of the Credibility of the Old Testament History.*

IF I be asked why I believe the history of those Divine interpositions which are recorded in the *Old Testament*, I may answer, that I am under a necessity of admitting this, in consequence of believing the history of Christ and his apostles, as it is written by the Evangelists. For we there find that the faith of the Jews was also the serious belief of Christ and his apostles, and that one of the arguments which they made use of for the proof of his Divine mission

was the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which the character of Christ, the principal circumstances of his history, and the nature and extent of the kingdom of God under him, were particularly pointed out.

In short, it is manifest, from the whole tenour of the New Testament, that Christianity is only a part of one grand dispensation of religion, and that it is the completion and proper sequel of Judaism; for we there find it every where taken for granted, that God revealed his will in a more imperfect manner to Moses, and the succeeding prophets; before the more perfect revelation of it by Christ and his apostles.

But, independent of this kind of evidence which ought to have the greatest weight with all Christians, there is not wanting sufficient reason to believe that the Jewish religion is true and divine, admitting what has been already proved, viz. the authenticity of the books of the Old Testament. That the Divine Being interposed in a miraculous manner in the affairs of the Jewish nation, and, more especially; that he dictated the law which Moses communicated to the children of Israel, we have the testimony not only of Moses himself, and of all the prophets who wrote the books of the Old Testament, but we have, in fact, the testimony of all the Jewish nation, who were in circumstances in which they cannot be imagined to have been imposed upon themselves, or to have had any motive to impose upon others.

That the history of the Jews, and of the miraculous interpositions of God in their favour, should, from the earliest accounts of them, have been firmly believed by the whole body of that nation, and that, even in their present dispersed, and calamitous situation, which has continued for seventeen hundred years, they should retain the same belief, cannot but be admitted to have the greatest weight.

Supposing the history of the departure from Egypt, and all the miraculous circumstances attending it, to have been a mere fiction, it must have been so *notoriously* false, that it could not but have been rejected, whenever it had been published. For things of so extraordinary a nature, on which the authority of all their laws, their most solemn customs, and religious rites, entirely depended, could not but have gained universal attention. The fabulous histories of other nations were always invented very late; and as nothing depended upon them, they may easily be supposed to have been introduced *gradually*, without much notice or alarm. Besides, none of them have stood the

test of a rigid scrutiny, but have fallen into universal contempt.

It is true that the history of the Old Testament sets the Jewish nation in general, in a very favourable point of light, and, on that account, it may be supposed that they would the more readily acquiesce in it, and wish to have it pass for true with their neighbours; but in other respects, also, it represents them, and their most distinguished ancestors, in a very unfavourable light, leaving them under the imputation of so many cruel and base actions, as no descendant of theirs would have wished them to lie under. Among these, is the history of Abraham and Isaac denying their wives, the deceit of Jacob, and the abominable treachery of two of his sons, together with the very great faults and even aggravated crimes of David,\* and others of their most illustrious heroes and princes.

The fabulous histories of the Greeks and Romans, are written in a manner very different from this. Even Josephus, the Jewish historian, who had the Old Testament to write from, and who had it not in his power to forge or alter much, endeavours to give the whole history as favourable a turn as possible; entirely suppressing the story of the golden calf,† and others, which might tend to give foreigners a disadvantageous idea of his ancestors and nation. What kind of a history may we suppose that such a writer as this would have *invented*, if he had been fairly at liberty to do it; and what does a history written upon so very different a plan as that of the Old Testament, exhibit, but the *face of truth*, however disagreeable and mortifying?

All the most distinguished rites and customs of the Jews, are intimately connected with, and founded upon the most distinguished miraculous facts in their history; and some of them are such as we cannot suppose that any nation would voluntarily impose upon themselves, being exceedingly burthensome, and seemingly hazardous. Among these we may reckon the rite of circumcision, which was probably borrowed by some other nations from them;‡ a weekly day of rest from labour, not plowing their fields, or tilling their grounds, every seventh year,§ and the appearance of all

\* See "The History of the Man after God's own Heart." 1761. Chandler's "Review of the History," &c. &c. "A Letter to Dr. Chandler from the Writer of the History," &c. 1762.

† See Josephus, Antiq. B. 3, C. 5, S. 8, and Whiston, *Dissert.* II. S. 28.

‡ See Young, *Idol. Corrupt.* I. pp. 52—59.

§ See the Author's *Notes* on Exod. xxiii. 11, and Levit. xxv. 2, 7, 8.

their males three times in a year at one particular place, when the borders of their country must have been left defenceless, and they could have no dependence but upon an extraordinary providence for their security, which was promised in their law. Add to this, that they were surrounded by powerful and enterprising nations, who entertained an inveterate antipathy against them, and consequently could not be expected to neglect the fair opportunities which their festival solemnities afforded, to attack their borders, had they not been restrained by a superior influence. Yet their whole history affords not a single instance of any inroad being made upon them at those times.

To this may be added their being forbidden to have any foreign commerce, or to have many horses, \*, which was the great pride of their neighbours in time of peace, and a great advantage to them in time of war.

It has often been said that Moses himself, without any Divine instruction, might have formed the body of laws recorded in his writings, and have given all the other directions which he pretended to have received from God.† But, besides, that this supposition can never account for the whole nation having always believed that they had been led through the Red Sea, been fed with manna forty years, heard a supernatural voice delivering the ten commandments from Mount Sinai, and having crossed the River Jordan without either boat or bridge, &c. &c. &c. all which facts we find recognized in the most solemn offices of their stated public worship, many centuries after the time of Moses, it is in itself very improbable.

Moses appears, from many circumstances in his history, to have been a man of the greatest meekness, modesty and diffidence. He was exceedingly averse to assume any public character; he was easily governed by the advice of others; and what is particularly worthy of consideration, he wanted those talents which are peculiarly requisite for the part he is supposed to have acted, viz. those of an *orator* and a *warrior*. He had such an impediment in his speech, that he was obliged to take his brother Aaron to speak for him before Pharaoh, and the Israelites. The whole history of their march through the wilderness, shews that he had nothing of a military turn, without which more especially

\* See the Author's *Notes* on Deuteron. xvii. 16.

† See "A Dissertation" annexed to the Author's *Notes* on the Pentateuch.

no man could have expected to do any thing at the head of a people just revolted from the Egyptians. For it is observable, that in the engagements which they had with those people who opposed their passage, Moses never headed them himself, but left the whole command to Joshua, and others, while he was praying for them at a distance.

It has been said that Moses was a man of excellent understanding and judgment, but his own history by no means favours that supposition. For, excepting those orders and institutions which he published as from God, almost every thing else that is recorded by him shews him to have been a weak man, and of gross understanding. His behaviour with respect to the killing of the Egyptian, and his embarrassment with a multiplicity of business, till he was relieved by the sensible advice of Jethro, and many other circumstances, might be alleged in support of this opinion. These things sufficiently demonstrate that Moses, personally considered, was by no means a man capable of devising such a system of laws as his books contain, or of conducting that most intractable nation, as they were conducted, forty years through the wilderness.

Besides, if Moses had such a capacity, and had been of such a disposition as would have prompted him to act such an imposture as this, he would certainly have made some better provision than he did, for his own family and tribe. He had children of his own, and yet they did not succeed him in his extraordinary offices and power, nor do we find them possessed of any peculiar privilege or advantage whatever. They were not even of the higher order of priests, who yet enjoyed no privilege worth coveting; and the tribe of Levi in general, to which he belonged, was worse provided for than any other of the twelve; and, what is particularly disgraceful, Moses himself relates that the posterity of Levi were dispersed among the rest of the tribes as a punishment for the baseness and cruelty of their ancestors, in the affair of the Shechemite.

The tribe for which the greatest honours were reserved, in the prophecies of both Jacob and Moses, was that of Judah, with which Moses had no particular connexion. This was the tribe which was marked out as the seat of pre-eminence and power, and especially as the tribe from which the Messiah was to arise.

Besides, if Moses had meant to do any great thing for himself, it is not likely that he would have detained the

Israelites so long in the wilderness. Forty years exceeds the whole term of the active part of a man's life, according to the common course of it; and a short time would have been sufficient to instruct the people in the use of weapons, and the art of war, as it was practised in those rude times. Indeed, we do not find that much attention was given to this business, but that, on the contrary, almost their whole time was taken up with instructions on the subjects of legislation, religion and morals.

Though the Jewish history is far more ancient than that of any other nation in the world, and therefore we cannot expect to find it confirmed by any other accounts of such early transactions, yet, from the time that the Greeks and other nations began to write history, their accounts are sufficiently agreeable to the history of the Old Testament, allowance being made for the uncertainty there must have been in the communication of intelligence, in an age in which remote nations had very little intercourse. However, all the leading facts of the Jewish history, even those which respect Moses himself, the deliverance of the Israelites out of the power of the Egyptians, and many particulars in their subsequent history, are related by historians of other nations, with such a mixture of fable and mistake, as might be expected from people who had no better means of being better informed concerning them.

As to the history of the *fall of man*, and other particulars preceding the time of Moses, and the memory of his immediate ancestors, it may be allowed that there is a mixture of fable, or allegory in it, without affecting the history that is properly *Mosaic*, and consequently, the truth of the Jewish religion.\* It should be considered, however, that Moses relates only such of the more remarkable transactions of the times preceding his own, and of his remote ancestors, as it may well be supposed that their descendants would carefully, and might easily transmit to their posterity; and only eight generations intervened between Moses and Noah.

\* "Mosem quod spectat, hunc ego prophetam maximum divinitus actum et inspiratum, miraculis munitum, et supra sortem humanum evectum, semper habui et habiturus sum.—Neque huic obstat, quod doctrinam illam de rerum Genesi, parabola vel allegoria aliquatenus involutam, ut ante me plures alii, crediderim." *Ad Vir. Claris. A.B.*, by Dr. Thomas Burnet, annexed to *De Statu Mortuorum*. Ed. 2d, 1728, p. 118. See also Middleton's "Essay on the allegorical and literal interpretation of the Creation and Fall of Man." Works 1752, 4to. II. p. 131, his Examination of the Bishop of London's Discourses. Works III. pp. 195—198, and the Author's Notes on Gen. iv. 21. Also Remarks on Middleton and Defence of the literal Interpretation, in Shuckford's "Creation and Fall." 1753, Pref. pp. iv. &c. and xxiv, &c. and pp. 236, &c.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS, DERIVED FROM PRESENT APPEARANCES.



## SECTION I.

*Arguments from the Existence, Propagation and good Effects, of the Jewish and Christian Religions.*

HAVING considered the evidence of the Jewish and Christian revelations, as far as it depends upon the testimony of those who received them, and especially of those who have written the history of them, I shall now proceed to lay before my readers some evidence of a different kind, the facts from which it arises being either the subjects of universal observation, or recorded in general histories, of universally allowed credit.

The very existence and reception of such systems of religion as the Jewish and Christian, are remarkable facts of this kind. That other religions, such as the different species of Heathenism, and that of Mohammed, should have been established, and gained credit, may be accounted for without supposing them to be true; but the Jewish and Christian religions were so circumstanced, at their institution, that it seems impossible to account either for their existence, or the credit which they are known to have obtained, without supposing them to be true and divine.

The faith of Jews and Christians respecting God, as one Being, the Maker, Governor, and righteous Judge of all, concerning moral duty and a future state, are so agreeable to reason, and yet so much more just and sublime than the moral and religious systems of other nations, especially about the time when these two religions were severally established (in which both the religion and morals of all their neighbouring nations were remarkably corrupt), that, considering the situation of the Jews and primitive Christians, with respect to study and inquiry, we cannot but

conclude that they must have had sources of information which other nations had not. Indeed, the writings of the Jews and Christians bear no traces of their religious knowledge being the deduction of any extraordinary sagacity or reasoning of their own; and men who attain to superior knowledge by their own reasoning, and superior powers, are generally ready enough to make a show of their reason, and are willing to secure to themselves whatever reputation can accrue from it. But here we find admirable systems of religious and moral knowledge, published by persons who disclaim all merit with respect to them, and who do not pretend to have discovered them by their own powers.

The great object of these two religions, especially as fully revealed in the Christian, which was the completion of the whole scheme, is so sublime and excellent, that it could hardly have had any other source than the Universal Parent of good. This object is no less than to teach universal impartial virtue, and a superiority of mind to this world, in a firm faith of another and a better after death; and this truly catholic religion is not calculated for the use of any one people only, or made subservient to any particular form of civil government, but is designed to unite and bless all the nations of the world, under one spiritual head, Christ Jesus.

These observations relate to the Jewish and Christian religions, jointly: I shall now mention a few others which relate to them severally.

The religious poems and other compositions of the Jews, contain sentiments so admirably just and sublime, that the slightest comparison of them with the religious hymns of other nations, even in the most enlightened ages, cannot but lead us to suspect that the Jews were possessed of advantages for religious knowledge far superior to those of any other people.

While all the neighbouring nations were running fast into idolatry, and especially the worship of the sun, moon and stars, parcelling out the world into a great number of principalities, and assigning a separate divinity for each, Moses teaches a religion which begins with asserting that *one God*, by the word of his own power, and without the assistance or instrumentality of any inferior intelligent being, created the heavens and the earth, and even the sun, moon and stars themselves, and appointed the proper uses of them all; which struck at the very foundation of the religious systems of all other nations. That great principle which was aban-

done by all other nations, namely, the worship of one God, possessor of heaven and earth, and who fills both heaven and earth with his presence, was even the fundamental maxim of the Jewish state, and the great foundation of their civil as well as religious government.

While the rest of the world were practising the most abominable, impure and cruel rites, as acts of religious worship, and thought to recommend themselves to the favour of their gods, by the most absurd and unmeaning ceremonies, without ever having recourse to moral virtue for that purpose, Moses, indeed, instituted a ceremonial worship; but both he and all the Jewish prophets, repeatedly and in the strongest terms, assert the perfect moral character of the Supreme Being, the infinitely greater importance of purity of heart and integrity of life, and the utter insignificance of any rites, ceremonies or offerings, without them.

While other nations were addicted to the most wretched superstitions, having recourse to various divinations and arts of witchcraft, whenever they wanted to get intelligence concerning future events, or the assistance of superior powers, the Jewish people were taught to hold all these things in deserved contempt and abhorrence. They were instructed to expect no information concerning future events, or assistance in any undertaking, but from the one living and true God; and they were commanded to punish all those who pretended to the abominable arts of divination and witchcraft, with death.\* It is to be observed, also, that the Jewish prophets delivered themselves with gravity and seriousness, worthy of the majesty of him that sent them, and did not use those violent convulsions, foamings at the mouth, and extravagant gestures, which the Heathen diviners had recourse to, in order to dazzle and impose upon those who consulted them.

So far is there from being any pretence for saying that the Jews were naturally more intelligent than their neighbours, and attained those just notions of religion and morality by their own reason and good sense, that their own history always represents them, as stiff-necked, and slow of understanding; and to this very day their enemies have constantly

\* Exod. xxii. 18. Dent. xviii. 10, 11. "Not that they can do all such things indeed, as there is expressed; but for that they take upon them to be the mighty power of God, and to do that which is the only work of him, seducing the people, and blaspheming the name of God, who will not give his glorie to anie creature, being himself the King of glory and omnipotencie." *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, by Reginald Scot, Esq. 4to. 1584, p. 114.

reproached them, as being the most stupid of mankind.\* Besides, their history shews that the Jews were naturally as prone to idolatry and superstition, as any other people could be; and their frequent relapses into the idolatry of their neighbours, notwithstanding the most express warnings and awful judgments, demonstrate that, had it not been for Divine instructions, inculcated again and again, they would have been far from shewing an example of a purer religion, or more rational worship than such as prevailed in other countries. It must also be observed, that the rigorous adherence of the Jews to their religion, at present, and which has continued for ages, under the greatest external discouragements, is such as, considering their former proneness to desert it, demonstrates that they must have received the most convincing proof of its truth and divinity.

While the philosophers of other nations taught an exceedingly confined morality, treating those of their own nation only as brethren, and the rest of mankind as enemies, Moses inculcates the principles of the greatest humanity and tenderness in the treatment of strangers, reminding them that they themselves had been strangers in the land of Egypt; and that they knew the heart of a stranger. *Exod. xxii. 21.*

Upon the whole, it cannot be said that the religion and morality of the books of Moses was such as might have been expected, from the time in which he lived. Was it similar to any thing he could have learned in Egypt, or in any of the neighbouring countries? On the contrary, it was in almost every respect, most remarkably the reverse of the opinions and practices of those times, and therefore must have had some other origin.

The form of a free and equal government, which was particularly recommended to the Jews, and under which they lived for a considerable time, † was one of which there is no other example in the East, where kingly and arbitrary governments only, are known even to this day. Such espe-

\* "The more weak and sottish this people were of themselves, the better was God's great end answered, in distinguishing himself and his revelations by them; the less they did or could do in their own defence, the more illustrious was that very extraordinary providence which protected them. The less capable they were of inventing the great things contained in their books, the more apparently did these point out another author; and prove more incontestably, that they had such intelligence communicated to them from above." *Law's Theory*, p. 114.

† See Fleming's "History of Hereditary Right." 8vo. 1711, pp. 77—109. This Author, who advocates the *Revolution* against the lineal succession of the Stuarts, shews that "the Israelites always possessed the power to choose their kings."

cially was the government of Egypt, where they had resided above two hundred years, and to the institutions of which it appears that they were remarkably prone, notwithstanding what they had suffered in that country ; and all the land of Canaan was under the dominion of a great number of petty kings or tyrants ; whereas, it is observed of the Israelites, before the times of Saul (by whose appointment to be king they made an infringement in their original constitution), that every man did what was right in his own eyes. Indeed, the civil government of the Hebrews was so exceedingly favourable to liberty, virtue, and domestic happiness, as, considering the many absurd and iniquitous constitutions of other nations, furnishes a very strong argument for its being of Divine appointment.

Lastly, I shall observe, that the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have been exactly fulfilled, some of them long since the books which contain them were translated into other languages, and dispersed all over the world, fully prove that the writers of them had Divine communications. But this argument I reserve for a distinct consideration, in favour of the whole system of Jewish and Christian revelation, as one.

The very pretensions of Jesus Christ, are a sufficient proof that there was something supernatural in his case. Before his time the Jews had had no prophets for several hundred years, nor do they seem to have expected any; before the appearance of the Messiah, or his fore-runner ; and no Jew had any idea of extending the proper *kingdom of God* to those who did not conform to the institutions of Moses. How then should it ever have come into the head of any Jew, and especially a person so obscurely born, and so privately educated as Jesus was, to assume more power than any of their former prophets, more than even Moses himself had pretended to, and to act and speak from God by a more constant and intimate kind of inspiration than any before him ? How can it be supposed that any Jew should have formed the *idea* or the *wish*, to say nothing of the *power*, of effecting a thing so fundamentally contrary to any notion that was ever entertained by a Jew, whether, with respect to his character, he was virtuous or vicious ?

When the wisest of the Heathen philosophers entertained great doubts with respect to a future state, when the belief of it was almost worn out in the world, how can we account for Christ's preaching, with such steadiness and assurance as he did, the doctrine not only of a future state, but of a

*resurrection*, of which nothing in nature could have given any man the least idea; and yet to this resurrection Christ referred all the hopes of his followers, and gave the fullest proof of his own entire persuasion concerning it, by calmly yielding himself up to death, in full confidence of rising again from the dead in a very few days, as a proof of the divinity of his doctrine and mission, and a pattern of a future and general resurrection. How, I say, can we account for these extraordinary views, or this constancy in the pursuit of them, but upon the supposition that Christ was inspired, and authorized by God, in preaching and acting as he did?

The rise of so remarkable a religion as the Christian, in the circumstances in which it made its first appearance, and also the invincible patience and fortitude of the primitive Christians, in persevering in the profession of the gospel, notwithstanding the ridicule and severe persecution to which they were thereby exposed, both from the Jews and the rest of the world, and the readiness with which such numbers of them died martyrs to their profession, are easily accounted for, on the supposition that Christianity is true; but they must certainly be puzzling facts to an unbeliever, who considers the uniformity of human nature, how strong a conviction the conduct of the primitive Christians implies, and what proofs are necessary to produce that conviction; and this not in the case of a single person, for which no reason would have been required, but of great numbers, not of Jews only, but of all nations in the world, and some the most learned and inquisitive of their age.

The time and manner in which the Jewish and Christian revelations were promulgated, were so admirably adapted to the state and circumstances of the world, and were such a seasonable check upon the disorders of it, as makes it exceedingly probable that a scheme so truly excellent, and so seasonably applied, could only proceed from the *Father of lights*, and the *giver of every good and perfect gift*.

Abraham and his posterity began to be distinguished by God at the very time that the primitive religion of mankind began to degenerate into idolatry; so that, for many ages, they bore their testimony to the unity, the supremacy, moral character, and government of God; and being situated in the very centre of the then civilized part of the world, they must have been some check upon the prevailing idolatry, and the wickedness which accompanied it. And, bad as the state of things was in the Heathen world, it is very probable that,

without this provision, it would have been much worse ; and it is remarkable, that the idolatry and wickedness of the great civilized nations, in the neighbourhood of Judea, far exceeded that of the more uncivilized part of the world. The systems of idolatry which now subsist in Asia, Africa or America, are innocent things compared with the horrid systems of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Canaanites or Tyrians, or even than the religions of Greece, of Rome, and that of all this western part of the world.

When the Jews were infected by the religious customs of their neighbours, and were brought back to the worship of the one true God (as they always were) by very severe judgments, in which the hand of God was very conspicuous, particularly when they were brought back from a state of captivity among other nations, it could not but be an useful lesson to their neighbours, as well as to themselves ; and many facts in the Jewish history make it evident, that their religion and their prophets were much revered in the neighbouring states. This we see particularly in the history of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites, and of the application made to the prophet Elisha by Naaman and Hazael, persons of distinguished rank in the court of the King of Syria. The decrees of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, also, and those of the first Kings of Persia, which were published through all the provinces of those extensive empires, must have made the Jews and their religion generally known and respected.

In later times, after the conquest of Alexander the Great, we both find great numbers of strangers residing in Judea, on the account of religion, and also that the Jews themselves were dispersed, in a most remarkable manner, into every part of the civilized world, there being no city, or place of note, without them. Their assiduity in making proselytes is sufficiently known, and the effects of it are manifest in the number of *devout Gentiles*, who were brought over to the worship of the true God, though it is probable they did not choose to be initiated into all the rites of the Jewish religion.

That the benefit of the Jewish religion was not to be confined to that nation, but was also to have a considerable influence on the minds even of distant nations, is evident from many passages of the books of Moses ; as when it is said that God would be glorified by their means in the sight of all the Heathen, &c. See Deut. iv. 6. Ps. xvi. 23.

The Christian religion has evidently effected a reformation of the idolatry and abominable customs of the Gentile world.

an effect which all the wisdom and philosophy of mankind would never have produced. There are numerous testimonies of the Heathens in favour of the good morals of the primitive Christians. Celsus owns that there were among them many temperate, modest and understanding persons ; and the Emperor Julian recommends to the Heathen pontiffs the example of the Christians, for their kindness and humanity to strangers, and not only to those of their own religion, but to the Heathens, and for their seeming sanctity of life ; and to this he ascribes the progress that Christianity had made in the world.\*

Christianity has also bettered the state of the world in a civil and political respect, giving men a just idea of their mutual relations and natural rights, and thereby gradually abolishing slavery,† with the servile ideas which introduced it, and also many cruel and barbarous customs. The generous principles of Christianity have greatly contributed to render those European governments, which are nominally arbitrary, more favourable to security and happiness, than the freest ancient Heathen states. The corruption of Christianity has, no doubt, greatly lessened its good effects ; but still, as it may be clearly proved, that the very worst state of Christendom, with respect to religion, and the influence of it, was preferable to Heathenism, at the time of the promulgation of Christianity,‡ it may be hoped that, with the restoration of genuine Christianity, we shall see the revival of all the happy effects of it.

The time of the promulgation of Christianity was the most seasonable that could have been chosen, both with respect to its evidence, and its salutary effects. It is unquestionable, that the Heathen world was then most deplorably corrupt, without the least hope of a remedy by any natural means ; and even the generality of the Jews had greatly departed from the genuine moral principles of their own divine religion, and a very considerable sect of them had abandoned the doctrine of a future state.

At this remarkable period, almost all the civilized part of the world composed one immense empire, by which means the knowledge of Christianity was readily communicated

\* See the Epistles of Julian, quoted in his Life, by *De la Bléterie*, p. 270, &c. who adds, " Il étoit forcé d'avouer que rien n'avoit donné plus de lustre et d'avantage au Christianisme, que l'hospitalité et le soin des pauvres ; devoirs si négligés des Païens." P. 272. See also Lardner's Works, VIII. pp. 416, 417.

† See Robertson's Sermon, 1755, p. 32.

‡ See Benson's " Reasonableness of the Christian Religion," 1759. 3d Edit. II. p. 257.

from one country to another ; and the apostles had the easier access to every place of note by means of the Jews, who were previously settled there, in whose synagogues they had an opportunity of preaching both to the Jews, and also to the Gentile inhabitants.\*

It was, also, a circumstance of great moment to the evidence of Christianity, that it was promulgated in the most learned and inquisitive age in all antiquity ; so that great numbers of persons would have both the inclination and ability to inquire into it, and satisfy themselves concerning it.

All these circumstances, put together, certainly give us the idea of a wise and kind Parent, interposing in favour of his offspring, at a time when they stood in most need of it, adapting his relief to their real occasions, and applying it in the most seasonable and judicious manner.

## SECTION II.

*Arguments from standing CUSTOMS, &c. in favour of the Jewish and Christian Religions.*

THERE are several religious customs which have been constantly observed by Jews and Christians, concerning which no probable conjecture can be formed, except that which is alleged in the history of those revelations, as the observance of one day in seven for the purpose of rest from labour, in commemoration of God's having rested or ceased from his work after the six days of creation ; the *Passover*, in commemoration of the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites when all the first-born of the Egyptians were destroyed ; the feast of *Pentecost*, which was designed to perpetuate the memory of the giving of the law from Mount Sinai ; and the feast of *Tabernacles*, to remind them of their having lived in tents in their passage through the wilderness. Of this kind, also, is the celebration of the *Lord's Supper* among Christians, in order to commemorate the death of Christ, which it cannot be supposed that they would have done, if he had not likewise risen from the dead, as he himself had foretold.

Now *solemn customs* are universally acknowledged to be, in many cases, the best memorials of important events ; because they suppose a whole people repeating their testi-

\* The effect of the Roman conquests, is eloquently described by *Robertson*. Sermon, 1755, pp. 13, 14.

mony to them as often as the rite is celebrated; and this being continued from generation to generation, the original evidence has all the strength that it could possibly have when transmitted to us by succession.

It will be said that we find in the Heathen world religious customs, which are said to have been instituted in commemoration of such remarkable events as suppose the truth of their religions, as Eleusinian mysteries, in which were represented the rape of Proserpine, and the introduction of corn among the Athenians by her mother Ceres. But there is this essential difference between the religious customs of the Jews or Christians, and such as these among the Heathens. The Jews and Christians have *written histories* of all their religious institutions of equal antiquity with the institutions themselves; and in these histories both the origin of the custom is recorded, and the manner in which every thing relating to it is to be performed, is particularly described. On the contrary, the Greek and Roman writers of later ages, finding a practice in use, before the invention of letters, might easily add to the traditional account of it, and so embellish the narration, that, in time, the use of the custom, which had some foundation in history, might be essentially changed.

Thus I make no doubt but that, with respect to Eleusinian mysteries, there was a woman called Ceres, who, or her son Triptolemus, taught the Athenians the use of corn, that she had a daughter called Proserpine, who was stolen from her by some person whose name was Pluto. But that this Pluto was god of the infernal regions, and carried his wife thither, and that Ceres lighted a torch at Mount Etna, and went in quest of her all over the world, was, most probably, an embellishment of the poets, and no necessary inference from the custom.

Customs with merely traditional explanations are very apt to vary in different places, so that, in a course of many years, there being no written history to rectify any mistake, both the practice itself, and the account of it, may easily become, by means of successive innovations, quite unlike what they were originally. If we had not histories of England to have recourse to, how differently might our customs of wearing oak on the twenty-ninth of May, and making bonfires on the fifth of November, have been represented? Nay, we have many customs which have, no doubt, been kept up, without interruption, from the time of Heathenism, the origin of which is merely conjectural, even among the

learned, and altogether unknown to the common people who practise them.\*

On the subject of this part of my work I must observe, that the earth itself bears several indelible marks of the transactions which are recorded in the histories of the Jewish and Christian religions. At least, they are such as are easily and clearly accounted for, on the supposition that those histories are true, and they are not easily accounted for, on the supposition that they are false.

That there has been some such convulsion in the earth, as must have been produced by the general deluge, is acknowledged by many naturalists, even those who are not believers in revelation. The dead sea is very likely to have been occasioned by such a destruction of an inhabited country as is related in the Mosaic history of Sodom and Gomorrah. Travellers of unquestionable authority say, that it is almost possible to trace the progress of the children of Israel through the wilderness. More especially, several of them have given drawings of the rock at Rephidim, and they are unanimous in their opinion that the holes and channels which are worn in it must have been made by water, and yet that it is in a place where it is not at all probable that there should ever have been any natural spring or river, and where there is far from being any water at present. Matthew says that the *rocks were rent* at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus; and travellers say that there is, at this day, a most remarkable cleft in the rocks of Mount Calvary, such as cannot well be supposed to have been produced by any natural earthquake, not having separated the *strata*, but divided them all perpendicularly.†

These last-mentioned circumstances are far from amounting to a demonstration of the truth of the Jewish and Christian histories, but they agree so remarkably with them, as must add to their credibility; and all the facts which have been recited in this part, put together, certainly represent the

\* One remarkable annual custom of offering a stag at St. Paul's, which had been built on the site of a temple of Diana, is mentioned by Erasmus, and ascertained by Strype to have been continued as late as 1557. See *Erasmi Op.* V. p. 701, quoted, with remarks, in his *Life*, by Knight, 1726, pp. 297—301. On "Ceremonies probably brought into the Church by the early Converts to Christianity" from Paganism, See *The Translator's Preface* to "The Conformity between modern and ancient Ceremonies," from the French, 8vo. 1745, pp. xxiii—xxvii.

† On the subject of the two foregoing paragraphs, the reader may usefully consult several of Bishop Clayton's publications, especially his translation of "A Journal from Grand Cairo to Mount Sinai, by the *Prefetto* of Egypt." 1758. See *New and Gen. Biog. Dict.* 1784, III. p. 437, or his *Life*, by Dr. Kippis, *Biog. Brit.* III. p. 524.

known state of things to be such, as cannot be accounted for without supposing those histories to be true. Admitting the truth of those histories, the present state of things has arisen easily and naturally from the preceding ; but, on the contrary supposition, we can see no connexion between them, so that what is known to all the world, and is the subject of every day's observation, is altogether inexplicable.

### SECTION III.

#### *Various INTERNAL EVIDENCES of the Truth of the Scripture History.*

BESIDES the *direct* evidences, which may be drawn from the canonical books of the New Testament, in favour of the truth of Christianity, an attentive reader of them cannot but observe several internal characters, which bear the strongest marks of genuineness and truth, on account of their perfect resemblance to other genuine and true histories. Some of these circumstances, intermixed, as they necessarily are, with others of a different nature, I shall take notice of in this place. Every thing of this nature is plainly a *standing evidence* of the truth of the Christian history, independent of any testimony in its favour.

The whole of the Scripture history abounds with so many particulars concerning times, places and persons, as are strong internal marks of authenticity, and make it look exceedingly unlike any fiction. Besides, it is hardly possible to imagine any reason or motive for contriving such a history as that of the Old Testament, and endeavouring to impose it upon the Jewish nation, as the genuine history of their ancestors, and the only authentic standard of their laws and customs.

The Jewish history is also very unlike the accounts which the writers of all other nations have given, of their antiquities, and has much more the appearance of truth, with respect to the times assigned for *generations of men*, and *successions of kings*. Those of the Jewish history, from before the time of Moses, are agreeable to the present state of things, and the present condition of human life, whereas the ancient histories of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome, represent the term of human life, and the state of human affairs, as in a condition much unlike what it is now, and such as it is still more improbable that it should have been then. The reigns of kings do not, at a medium,

exceed nineteen years. This Sir Isaac Newton has shewn from the histories of all nations which are certainly known to us.\*

Now those of the kings of Judah and Israel do not exceed, but fall short of this number; whereas, those of the states above-mentioned, are said to have reigned, one with another, some thirty, and others forty years a-piece, and this in times of great confusion, when many of them died violent deaths. In like manner, the generations of men, at a medium, are found, by Sir Isaac Newton, to have had an interval of about thirty-years,† and such they will be found to have been in the Jewish history, which is, therefore, probable; but in those of some other nations, this interval must have been fifty or sixty years, which is altogether improbable.

The different accounts of the same transaction, written by different Evangelists, agree in all the principal things, which shews that they had equally attended to them, and had the same ideas of them; but they relate their histories in a different order and manner, and with many variations in small circumstances; which shews that they did not write in concert, as they must have done to have agreed so well as they do, if they had not written from their memories, which were equally impressed with the idea of all the principal transactions.‡

The traces of a most *excellent character*, especially of great humility, integrity, benevolence and devotion, which are apparent in the authors of the New Testament, supply a very strong internal proof, that they have not endeavoured to impose upon mankind. Whether a man himself may intend to do it or not, it will be impossible for him either to speak or write much, without giving to an attentive observer some idea of his own moral character, especially if the subject be of a moral nature, and have the most distant relation to religion. In this case, the greatest artifice, attention and address, will not be sufficient to conceal every circum-

\* "The thirty Kings of England, William the Conqueror, &c., reigned 648 years, which is  $21\frac{1}{2}$  years a-piece, the sixty three Kings of France, *Pharamundus*, &c., 1224 years, which is  $19\frac{1}{2}$  years a-piece." Newton's Chronol. 1728, p. 53.

† "Generations from father to son, may be reckoned one with another, at about thirty-three or thirty-four years a-piece, or about three generations to an hundred years." *Id.*

‡ Even respectable commentators have been so inattentive to the value of this consideration, that they have suffered artists to adorn their works most absurdly. Thus, in the frontispiece to Macknight's Harmony, and in the *vignette* to Le Clerc's *Nov Test.* Amst. 1702, the four Evangelists are represented as sitting together, each writing at the same moment, and apparently under one supernatural dictation.

stance that has a connexion with *feelings* and *dispositions of mind*.

Now the writers of the New Testament were very evidently men of no art or cunning whatever. Except St. Paul, they must have been men of very plain understandings; and though not illiterate, yet some of them were barely capable of expressing themselves with propriety upon necessary occasions. Now, that men of this character should even think of, or attempt, and much less should actually carry on, and succeed in a scheme of such complicated imposture as the history of Christ and of the apostles must be, if it were not founded in truth, is altogether incredible. In fact, this would be more miraculous than any thing that these writers relate concerning themselves or their Master.

On the contrary, we cannot but see, in the writings of the Evangelists, the plainest marks of a genuine love of truth, and of a disposition the farthest in the world from a design to deceive and impose upon others, even for their good. It is hardly possible to read their writings with attention, without imbibing something of their excellent spirit, feeling something of their ardent love of virtue, their zeal to promote the best interests of mankind, their strong attachment to their Lord and Master, their reverence for God, and devotedness to his will.

The writers of the New Testament have not had the art, nor do they seem to have had the disposition to conceal their own failings, or the objections that were made to the character or pretensions of their Master; but they relate incidents of this kind with as little disguise, and as great simplicity, as they do any other parts of their history. Can it be thought that any friend of the Apostle Peter would have invented the disgraceful story of his cowardly desertion of his Master, or that any friend of James and John would have mentioned their ambitious views, and the mortifying reproof which was given them by Jesus on that account?

There is not in any of the Evangelists one direct encomium on any of the apostles, or even on their Master himself. The very high opinion which we cannot help forming of his character, from the perusal of their writings, is collected entirely from *facts*, *discourses*, and *incidents* indirectly mentioned; and men who had been much solicitous about their character and reputation in the world, would hardly have trusted to this. Nothing is more common in ancient Heathen writers than direct encomiums on their friends, their patrons, and even on themselves. This is even the

case with writers of the greatest ingenuity, and the best understanding, who might have been thought to have perceived the folly of such excessive vanity. But the whole narrative of the evangelical historians shews them to have been men altogether void of art or design, men who wrote from their memory only, and who were, indeed, little capable of framing a  *cunningly devised fable*. Upon the whole, there are no writings in the world that have so many internal characters of truth.

The very *character of Jesus Christ* is so exceedingly unlike any other character whatever in the whole history of mankind, there is something in it so remarkably great and extraordinary, especially such an amazing mixture of dignity and condescension, that we cannot suppose that such men as the Evangelists should have conceived it, or have supported it so uniformly as they have done, on a great variety of occasions. The *fact* demonstrates that they must have had an *original* to copy after. In this case they must have written from their memories, and not from imagination.

I would not scruple to appeal to any person, whose moral sentiments have not been perverted, whether he can possibly reconcile the character of Christ, the doctrines which he taught, and his general conduct, with that of an enthusiast or an impostor, and consequently whether his history does not on this account bear internal marks of truth. He taught and laboriously inculcated the precepts of the purest morality. He did not puzzle his hearers with subtle distinctions in morals, but insisted chiefly upon great and general principles, as the love of God, the love of mankind, and universal purity of heart, which are calculated to form a complete character, adapted to every station and condition in life; and he more especially enforced those virtues which are the least ostentatious, but the most essential to true greatness and excellence of character, viz. the forgiveness of injuries, humility, contentment, and resignation to the will of God.

He never consulted his own ease or pleasure, but constantly laboured and felt for others, going about doing good to the souls and bodies of men. He spared neither the faults of his friends, nor the vices of his enemies, though the former were ever so dear to him, and the latter ever so powerful and inveterate. He discovered the most astonishing wisdom and presence of mind, whenever ensnaring questions were put to him. He sought no wordly emoluments or honours, but persisted in a course of life which rendered

him in the highest degree obnoxious to those who were in power ; and when he deemed the great purpose of his useful life to be accomplished, he no longer secreted himself from the malice of his persecutors, but in a firm belief, and with a peremptory declaration, that he should rise to the most distinguished greatness, and that he should raise all his disciples and friends to similar honours in a future life, he submitted, with inimitable calmness and composure, to a most cruel and ignominious death.

If there be any truth in history, all this, and much more than this, was unquestionably *fact*. Now, what is there in human nature, or in the history of mankind, that can lead us to imagine that the man who could act this part should solemnly assert that he was commissioned by God to do it, without really having such a commission ? A good man will immediately say, if Divine interpositions be possible in themselves, and if God has ever spoken by man, Jesus Christ must certainly have been the man ; and an intelligent person may perceive that the time in which he lived was the most proper time for his appearance. The man whose life and conversation is agreeable to the gospel, and who feels that he enjoys the advantages of his being and condition, to the greatest perfection, in consequence of it, must feel what will be to him the most irresistible evidence, that the gospel proceeds from the Giver of every good and perfect gift. *He has the witness in himself, and has peace and joy in believing.*

The discourses of our Lord before his death are certainly altogether unaccountable upon the supposition of his being an impostor. They discover the greatest sense of personal dignity and importance, the most perfect goodness and benevolence of heart, the most tender affection to his immediate followers, and the strongest sympathy with them under a prospect of the consternation into which they would be thrown by his approaching death ; and yet, though he endeavoured to suggest the most proper and effectual considerations to encourage and support them under so severe a trial, he is careful to give them no hopes of any advancement or happiness in this world, but only in those mansions which he was going to prepare for them, after they should be so hated of all men, that he who killed them should think that he did God service. With what view could an impostor be supposed to talk in this strain, or what could a few illiterate men expect to gain by supporting the pretensions of a man who wanted to impose upon all the world, and who, after being prosecuted as a criminal, was condemned and crucified ?

In the discourses of Christ, we perceive a character and manner, in several respects, peculiar to himself, even much more so than that of Socrates in the dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. It is even considerably different from that of Moses, or any of the ancient prophets, which a Jew, who had invented, would probably have imitated. This style and manner, being so truly original, has, certainly, the appearance of being copied from real life. Besides, the discourses of Christ are not general declamations on the subject of virtue and vice, but are accompanied with many circumstances relating to particular persons, times and places, which a person who wrote from imagination would never have thought of, or at least would not have hazarded.

The manner in which Christ and his apostles proposed and enforced the evidences of their mission, affords a very strong presumptive argument that they were no impostors. They generally exhibited their proofs without the least comment upon them, leaving them to produce their own natural effect upon the mind of the unprejudiced observer. At other times they plainly and peremptorily assert their commission from God, simply appealing to the miracles which they wrought, or to ancient allowed prophecies, in favour of their pretensions; never reasoning about the force of them, or of their own accord starting and obviating objections, though they never declined giving plain and satisfactory answers to all that were proposed to them.

On the other hand, impostors, conscious of their having no satisfactory proof of what they pretend to be, never fail to make a great parade of the little seeming evidence which they can venture to allege; they are quick-sighted to foresee, and ready to obviate every objection to which they can make any plausible reply, and they artfully evade such as they cannot answer. Such was the conduct of Mohammed; as a person of any tolerable discernment may perceive in reading the Koran; and the very reverse was the conduct of Christ and his apostles, as must be obvious to any person who reads the Gospels and the book of Acts.

Upon the whole, we cannot but conclude, that the Evangelical history has all the *air* and the usual *characteristics* of truth; and that men circumstanced as the writers of the New Testament were, should have written as they have done, without writing from known facts, is altogether incredible, and the whole history of mankind can exhibit nothing parallel to it.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION FROM PROPHECY.

**THE** last course of arguments which I shall produce in favour of the Jewish and Christian revelations is, that which is derived from prophecy, which is of a mixed nature, depending in part upon the testimony of the friends of revelation, that such prophecies were delivered, and upon credible history, that they have been fulfilled. In some cases, however, it is a matter of public notoriety, that the books which contain the prophecies were extant long before the events to which it is asserted that they correspond; so that this argument borrows no aid from the testimony of the friends of revelation only.

It must be acknowledged that God only can foresee, and with certainty foretel future events, at least such as are very remote, and which depend upon causes which did not exist, or which could not be known by man to exist, at the time when they were foretold. It is not necessary, however, that the event should correspond to the prophecy so exactly, as that it might have been distinctly described before it came to pass. For in how dark and obscure a manner soever the prophecy be expressed, it will be sufficiently manifest that it came from God, if, after the event, the correspondence between them be so great, that human foresight could not have described it in such a manner, and if it be highly improbable, or impossible, that it should have been described in such a manner, at random. But many prophecies recorded in the Scriptures were as intelligible before, as after the event, and yet they did not at all contribute to their own accomplishment, by inducing the friends of revelation to exert themselves, in order to bring about the thing foretold; the event being produced by natural and foreign causes.

Of the many prophecies which are recorded in the books of Scripture, I shall only mention a few of the more considerable, reciting in the first place, the words of the prediction, and then relating from history the corresponding events.

## SECTION I.

*Prophecies relating to various Nations which had Connexions with the Jews.*

THE prophecies concerning the posterity of Abraham by **ISHMAEL**, have been remarkably fulfilled; and the present state of the Arabs, who are chiefly descended from Ishmael, is an attestation of their truth and divinity.

Several of these predictions imply, that the posterity of Ishmael should be numerous; as Gen. xvi. 6—12: “And the angel of the Lord said unto Hagar, ‘I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, and it shall not be numbered for multitude.’ And the angel of the Lord said unto her, ‘Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael, and he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.’” To Abraham also God said, Gen. xxi. 13: “And also of the son of the bond woman will I make a nation, because he is of thy seed.” In several other places the prophecy concerning Ishmael being a great nation is repeated; as Gen. xxi. 20, with the additional circumstances of his begetting *twelve princes*.

Now all these particulars have been remarkably fulfilled. The descendants of Ishmael were a considerable nation in very early times, and under Mohammed and his successors, the Arabs extended their conquests over a great part of the world. All the northern coasts of Africa abound with Arabs; Palestine is now almost entirely occupied by them; they also still retain their ancient seats, and are as numerous there as ever.

It was said that Ishmael should be a *wild man*, and the Arabs are wild and intractable even to a proverb. It was said that *his hand should be against every man, and every man’s hand against him*, and it is well known that the Arabs, and, probably, *the Arabs only*, of all the nations of the world, have constantly lived in a state of hostility with all mankind; many of them subsisting by plundering their neighbours, and the travellers and caravans which are obliged to pass through any part of their country; and besides this, their different clans and chiefs are almost always at war with one another.

It seems to be intimated, by Ishmael's *dwelling in the midst of all his brethren*, that his posterity should *continue* to dwell among them, and to subsist as a separate nation, notwithstanding this state of constant hostility; and it is truly remarkable, that, though the conquest of Arabia has been attempted by almost all the great empires which have bordered upon them, it has never yet been subdued; and no nation ever made the attempt without repenting of it, having met with nothing but disgrace and loss. This was most remarkably the case in the time of Trajan, the most warlike of all the Roman emperors, and when the empire was in its greatest strength.

The destruction of NINEVEH, the greatest and most flourishing city in the world while it stood, and the capital of the Assyrian empire, which subdued the ten tribes, and carried them captive, was distinctly and peremptorily foretold by the prophet Nahum, probably about the time of the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians; and in about seventy years after, that great empire was conquered, and the capital of it destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians.

BABYLON succeeded Nineveh in power and splendour, and Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered the Jews, and carried them into captivity; yet long before this event, and even before the Babylonians made any great figure among the nations, the utter ruin of their city and empire was foretold. The prophecies concerning it are long and circumstantial, and the description that is given of the condition to which it should be reduced, corresponds most exactly to several successive stages of it; and the whole prophecy is completely verified at this day.

The destruction of Babylon is foretold in general terms by Isaiah xxi. 9, and by Jeremiah l. 17, 18, and li. 8. The time of this event was fixed by Jeremiah, who wrote at the time that the Babylonian empire was in its greatest strength and glory. Jer. xxv. 11, 12: "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon, seventy years, and it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord."

The conquests of Cyrus, who besieged and took Babylon, were distinctly foretold by Isaiah; and that great conqueror is even mentioned by name, Isa. xlv. 1, &c. We have also an account of both those nations which joined in the conquest of Babylon, Isa. xxi. 2: "Go up, O Elam; besiege, O

Media;" and also in Jeremiah, li. 11: "The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon to destroy it."

The very manner in which the city was taken seems to have been alluded to in Isaiah xliv. 27: "That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers." Also in Jeremiah l. 28: "A drougt is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up." And again, li. 36: "I will dry up her seas, and make her springs dry." For the stratagem that Cyrus made use of to take the place was to divert the course of the river, and make his army enter the city, through the midst of which it had flowed, by its channel, which was then left dry.

The prophecies in which the utter destruction of Babylon is foretold are remarkably emphatical, and the accomplishment of them has been no less remarkably exact. Isa. xiii. 19—22: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there, but wild beasts of the deserts shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there; \* and the wild beasts of the island shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged."

Also, xiv. 22, 23: "For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and son and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts." Jer. l. 9, &c: "For lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the North country, and they shall set themselves in array against her. From thence she shall be taken. Because of the wrath of the Lord, it shall not be inhabited; but it shall be wholly desolate. Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. For it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. Therefore, the wild beasts of the desert, with

\* Mr. Dodson translates: *And howling monsters shall fill their houses; and the daughters of the ostrich shall dwell there; and goats shall dance there.* New Translation, 1790, p. 27.

the wild beasts of the island (that is, foreign wild beasts, not natives of the country), shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein, and it shall be no more inhabited for ever, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation."

History shews the full accomplishment of these and many other very circumstantial prophecies concerning the destruction of Babylon. This great city never recovered the blow which it received from Cyrus; for the river never returned to its old channel; and the neighbouring country becoming marshy, it soon became a very disagreeable situation, and in time not habitable.\* The destruction of the *idols of Babylon* had been very particularly foretold, and it was fully accomplished by Xerxes, who returned, defeated and disappointed from Greece, and wreaked his vengeance upon Babylon, taking its treasures and destroying all its idols, which the Persians held in abhorrence. Isa. xxi. 9: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods he has broken to the ground." xli. 1: "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle." Jer. l. 2: "Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces." li. 44, &c.: "And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he has swallowed up." The same circumstance is repeated afterwards, and it was fulfilled when Cyrus restored to the Jews the vessels of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem, and had lodged in the temple of Bel.

The *gradual desolation* of Babylon, till it came to that state of utter destruction, which is described by the prophets, is truly remarkable. Diodorus Siculus, who wrote a little before the time of Christ, says that the buildings were then ruined and decayed, a small part of it only being inhabited, and the rest of the enclosure employed in tillage. Pliny, who wrote in the first century after Christ, says that Babylon was reduced to solitude, being exhausted by the neighbourhood of Seleucia, which had been built upon the Tigris, not very far from it. Pausanias, who wrote about the middle of the second century, says, that of Babylon, the greatest city that the sun ever saw, there was nothing remaining but the walls; and Lucian, who wrote about the same time, says, that in a little time it would be sought for, and not be found, like Nineveh. In the time of Jerome, who lived in

\* See Prideaux's *Connection*, Pt. i. B. ii. 11th Ed. l. p. 175.

the fourth century, the whole enclosure of the walls of Babylon was actually converted into a chase for keeping wild beasts, and was used for that, and no other purpose, by many of the Kings of Persia. At length even the walls of Babylon, so much celebrated for their height and strength, were demolished; but whether by the Saracens, who conquered that country, is not known.\*

We find no mention made of Babylon for many centuries after this; but Benjamin, a Jew of Tudela, who travelled into that country, about seven hundred years ago, says that there then remained some of the ruins of Babylon, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, but that people were afraid to go into the place, on account of the serpents and scorpions with which it swarmed.† At present, it is not agreed among travellers where the great city of Babylon stood.

The prophecies concerning TYRE were, likewise, exceedingly numerous, referring to several successive periods in the history of that great commercial city; and they have all been remarkably fulfilled. I shall only mention the last of them, as it corresponds to the present state of Tyre. It was delivered by Ezekiel, who prophesied during the time of the Babylonish captivity. Ezek. xxvi. 3, &c.: "Thus saith the Lord God, 'Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up, and they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers. I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it,' saith the Lord God." The same circumstance is repeated afterwards, ver. 14: "'I

\* Prideaux's *Connection*, B. viii. II. pp. 809—811, and "Rauwolt's Travels into the Eastern Countries," 1574, in Ray's *Collection*, Pt. ii. Ch. vii. pp. 137—141. This traveller says, "We found ourselves to be just lodged without the walls of that formerly so famous kingly city, which now, with its magnificent and glorious buildings, is quite desolated and lies in the dust, so that every one that passeth through it, in regard of them, hath great reason to admire with astonishment, when he considers that this city, which hath been so glorious an one, and in which the greatest monarchs and kings that ever were have had their seats and habitations, is now reduced to such a desolation and wilderness, that the very shepherds cannot abide to fix their tents there to inhabit it. So that here is a most terrible example to all impious and haughty tyrants." P. 140.

† See these Travels, translated by the Rev. B. Gerrans, 1784, 12mo. p. 105. Rabbi Benjamin is said to have "began his travels in 1160, and to have returned in 1173." His translator, however, in a Dissertation, prefixed, offers some reasons to doubt whether Benjamin ever "left his native Tudela." He "cannot trust him out of Spain at any rate." Yet his book has gone through sixteen editions, in various languages.

will make thee like the top of a rock ; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon ; thou shalt be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken it,' saith the Lord God ;" and again ver. 21, " 'I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more. Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again,' saith the Lord God."

If we trace the history of this great city, we shall find that it suffered so much in consequence of several conquests, that there is not now the least trace of the ancient city ; and that which was afterwards built upon an island, and was called the *new city*, is now a heap of ruins, and is only visited by a few fishermen. Parvillerius, a Jesuit, whom Huetius, who was acquainted with him, calls a very candid man, and who resided ten years in Syria, said, that when he approached the ruins of Tyre, and beheld the rocks stretched forth to the sea, and the great stones scattered up and down on the shore, made clean and smooth by the sun, the waves and the winds, and of no use but for the drying of fishermen's nets, many of which happened to be at that time spread upon them, the prospect brought to his mind the prophecies of Ezekiel above-mentioned. \*

The fulfilment of prophecies concerning EGYPT is also very remarkable. They corresponded to several successive periods of its history, and the last of them is completely verified in the present state of that once great and noble, but now enslaved and miserable country. After the desolation of that land, and the captivity of the people by Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel prophesied (xxix. 14, 15,) that it should be " a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations ; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations." xxx. 12, 13 : " I will sell the land into the

\* Sandys, who visited the place in 1611, says, " this once famous Tyrus is now no other than a heap of ruins ; yet have they a reverent respect, and do instruct the pensive beholder with their exemplary frailty." *Travels*, B. iii. 7th Ed. p. 168. Maundrell, in 1697, thus describes what he saw : " This city, standing in the sea upon a peninsula, promises, at a distance, something very magnificent. But when you come to it, you find no similitude of that glory, for which it was so renowned in ancient times, and which the prophet *Ezekiel* describes. On the north side it has an old Turkish ungarrisoned castle ; besides which, you see nothing here, but a mere *Babel* of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c., there being not so much as one entire house left. Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly upon fishing ; who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence, as a visible argument, how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, viz. that it should be *as the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on.*" " *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem.*" 6th Ed. pp. 48, 49.

hand of the wicked, and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers ; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt."

History shews that, from that time to the present, Egypt has never had a prince of its own ; but has been successively under the power of the Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, Mamalukes and Turks.

## SECTION II.

### *Prophecies relating to the MESSIAH.*

ALMOST the whole of the JEWISH HISTORY, was the subject of exceedingly clear and distinct prophecies. The multitudes that should descend from Abraham were repeatedly foretold to that patriarch ; the different fates of Esau and Jacob were foretold to Isaac ; and the condition of each of the twelve tribes was the subject of the prophecy of Jacob when he lay on his death-bed, and also of that of Moses. The duration of their state of bondage in Egypt was made known to Abraham, and a great number of particular events were foretold by several prophets in every period of their history, to the Babylonish captivity, which Jeremiah foretold would last seventy years ; and so long, and no longer, it did continue, from the first captivity under Jehoiakim, to the return of the Jews under Cyrus, or from the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar to the rebuilding of it under Darius.

But those prophecies in which we are most interested as Christians, are those which relate to the MESSIAH ; whose coming was kept in view from the first of the communications of God to mankind, to the suspension of prophecy under Malachi.

As Christ and his apostles assert that all these prophecies are fulfilled, or to be fulfilled in him, it becomes us the more to study them, and to trace the correspondence between the prophecies and the events. I shall, therefore, collect into one view the principal circumstances relating to the Messiah, which are referred to by the prophets of the Old Testament, and which are known to correspond to the history of Christ.

We learn from these prophecies, that the Jews had reason to expect the appearance of a very glorious person, by means of whom both themselves and the rest of the world would receive very great advantages, of a spiritual nature ; that he would make his appearance in mean circumstances,

and that though he should lead a humble and exemplary life, working benevolent miracles, he should be rejected, and put to death; but that his death would be a principal means of promoting the great end of his coming, namely, the putting away of sin, or the reformation of the world; that after this state of humiliation and suffering, he should triumph over all his enemies, and establish a kingdom, which should extend over the whole world, and last to the end of time. This person, who, in the prophecies, is called *Shiloh* and *Messiah*, was to be a descendant of Abraham and David, to be born at Bethlehem,\* and to be preceded by a person resembling 'Elijah, to prepare his way. Lastly, he was to make his appearance while the second temple of the Jews was standing, and about five hundred years after the time of Ezra.

The following passages from the Old Testament Scriptures, among many others, seem to describe, or allude to, such a person as this; some of them referring to one circumstance, some to another, and some to several of them at the same time.

Gen. xlix. 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be." Here is an evident prophecy of some person, to whom the people should be gathered, and who was to make his appearance when the sceptre had departed, or was departing from Judah. Now Christ was born about the time when the Jews became subject to the Romans, their country being reduced into the form of a province of the empire; so that they lost the power of inflicting the punishment of death, of which they had not been deprived before, or, at least, for any length of time, though they had been tributary to several other nations. But, after the death of Herod, they lost it entirely, and finally.† This prophecy may also have a reference to the sovereignty departing from the *other tribes* before that period.

Isa. xi. 1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, &c.

\* The Author, in his later view of this prophecy, applied it to "the leader of the Jews at their restoration." See his *Notes*. Micah v. 2.

† On that occasion, according to Josephus, they sent an embassy to Rome, requesting that they "might be added to *Syria*, and be put under the authority of such presidents of theirs as should be sent to them." Antiq. B. xvii. C. xi. Sect. 2, ad fin. Whiston. See, also, Lardner's Works, I. pp. 45—54, 79 & 289.

and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Ver. 10: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." In this prophecy there is evidently announced to us a person who was to descend from Jesse, or David, whose authority was to extend not only over the Jews, but over the Gentiles also.

That the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, should derive great advantage from the coming of the Messiah, was not only the meaning of the promise of God to Abraham, that "in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed;" but it seems to be more especially alluded to in Ps. ii. 7, 8, which was always understood by the Jews as referring to the Messiah: "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The conversion of the Gentiles is more especially promised, Isa. xlix. 6: "And he said it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The following prophecy of Jeremiah contains a clear prediction of the Messiah, as to descend from David, though it probably refers to some more glorious display of his power than has yet been exhibited. xxiii. 5: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**"\* The same thing is also repeated, Jer. xxxiii. 14, &c.: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, **The Lord our Righteous-**

\* "And this is the name by which Jehovah shall call him, our Righteousness." *Blayney.*

ness. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel."

Micah v. 2—4: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." This prophecy led all the Jews to expect that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem; and this was exactly accomplished, for Mary was delivered of Jesus at that place, to which she and her family had repaired, in order to be enrolled, though her habitation was at Nazareth in Galilee.\*

That Christ should reside chiefly in Galilee, seems, also, to have been the subject of a prophecy: for at a time when that country was grievously harassed by the King of Assyria, just before the captivity of the ten tribes, 2 Kings xv. 29, Isaiah delivered the following prophecy, ix. 1, 2: "Though he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, he shall greatly honour her, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined:" for thus, as the learned Joseph Mede has shewn, this passage ought to have been translated.†

The character and humiliation of Christ, with several circumstances relating to his life and death, are plainly alluded to by Isaiah, in the following passages. liii. 13—15: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at

\* See p. 178, Note \*, and Hist. of Early Opin. B. iii. C. xx. Sect. 6, ad fin.

† The Author here, probably, quoted from memory. The following is Mede's translation: "As the first time he made vile (or debased) the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; so, in the latter time, he shall make it glorious; the way of the sea by Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." The translator adds, "If this be not a prophecy of Christ, I know not what it is." Mede's Discourses, B. i. D. 25. The same rendering is adopted in his Latin version of the passage. Clav. Apoc. B. iii. ad Cap. 7. Mede's Works, 1672. 3d Ed. pp. 101 & 457.

him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." liii. 1, &c.: "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" i. e. probably, as upon the *scape-goat* under the law, which was not hurt, but dismissed into the wilderness, to represent the entire removal or forgiveness of their sins. "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear (*or take away*) their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare (*or took away*) the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

It is impossible to find any character, or history, to which **this** prophecy corresponds, but that of Christ; and in him the whole of it was completely fulfilled; though there are

difficulties with respect to some particular passages, which are variously rendered by different translators.

The prosperity of the Jews under some future king was clearly foretold by the prophet Zechariah, ix. 9; and even the circumstance of his riding upon an ass was probably alluded to by him: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

When the second temple was built by those who returned from the Babylonish captivity, the old men, who remembered the temple of Solomon, wept, to see the difference; the latter temple being so mean in comparison of the former. But, to comfort them, the prophet Haggai says, ii. 4, &c.: "Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord,—and be strong all ye people of the land; for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts.—It is yet a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;—and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine:—the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former;—and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."

This prophecy limits the coming of Christ, whose presence made the second temple more truly glorious than that of Solomon, to some time before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when that temple was levelled with the ground.

But the time in which the Messiah should make his appearance, was most distinctly foretold by the prophet Daniel, who limited it to seventy weeks after the decree of the kings of Persia to rebuild Jerusalem, ix. 24, &c.: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."

Though there are several methods of computing these *seventy weeks* (every day of which is agreed to stand for a

year), yet it is plain, that, according to any of them, that term must have expired about the time of Christ.\* Accordingly, we find that there was, in fact, about that time, a general expectation among the Jews, and through all the East, of the appearance of some great prince, and reformer of religion.

That some person would be sent to *prepare the way for the Messiah*, seems to have been foretold, with sufficient clearness, in the following prophecies. We also see in them, that he was to resemble the prophet *Elias*; and it appears, that such a person was expected by the Jews about the same time.

Isa. xl. 3, 4: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

This prophecy immediately follows another, concerning the captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians, and is introduced by the following animated consolation, which was, no doubt, written under a prospect of the happy state of things which was to be introduced by the Messiah. Ver. 1, 2: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness," &c.

Mal. iii. 1, &c.: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." iv. 2: "Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, &c." Ver. 5, 6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

These are but a small part of the prophecies which pretty

\* See *Examen des Sentante Semaines*, &c. 12mo. Amst. 1707. This anonymous writer gives an amended version of the passage, with a paraphrase, and considers the principal objections of Jews to its Christian application.

plainly refer to Christ in the Old Testament ; and though some of them, I doubt not, are to have a much more complete accomplishment than they have hitherto received, yet so many of the particulars are already fulfilled, as abundantly prove, that those prophets wrote by Divine inspiration ; no other than God being able to describe so distant an event with such exactness. These prophecies ought certainly to excite our closest attention to a character so distinguished before hand, and rendered so conspicuous, as we may say, even before he made his appearance in the world ; and it should concur with other proofs, to strengthen our faith in the Divine mission of Christ, and the divinity of his religion.

### SECTION III.

#### *Prophecies in the New Testament.*

THE same spirit of prophecy which attended every stage of the *Jewish* dispensation, has no less distinguished the *Christian*, which is to be considered as the continuation and completion of the same general scheme.

The entire overthrow of the Jewish nation, and the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, with many remarkable circumstances preceding and attending them, were expressly foretold by Christ. So distinct was his foreknowledge of the great calamities that were to come upon his nation, that he was exceedingly moved and affected with the consideration of them, and he always expressed himself with the greatest tenderness and compassion whenever he mentioned them ; as Matt. xxiii. 37, 38 : “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”

Upon his approaching Jerusalem for the last time, it is said, Luke xix. 41, &c., that “ when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, ‘ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.’ ”

When he was going to be crucified, the expectation even of his own immediate suffering did not so far engross his thoughts, but that he felt the most lively compassion on the prospect of the future miseries of his countrymen. For, being followed by a great company of people, Luke xxiii. 27, &c., "and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him, Jesus turning unto them said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us; and to the hills, cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?'"

But the most circumstantial of the prophecies of our Lord, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, was delivered to his disciples, when they desired him to attend to the magnificence of that celebrated structure, as they were sitting in the full view of it, on the mount of Olives. He immediately replied, Matt. xxiv. 2, "See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down;" and this was even literally fulfilled about forty years after, when the city was taken by Titus, to the great regret of that Roman general, who would gladly have preserved so glorious a structure.

Several things that preceded and accompanied this dreadful overthrow of the Jews were distinctly recited by our Lord, as signals to his disciples to flee from the place, in order to escape the impending calamities. For when they asked him *when those things should be*, he replied, Matt. xxiv. 4—7, "Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." Now, according to the testimony of Josephus, and other historians, all these things did, in a very remarkable manner, precede the destruction of Jerusalem. Indeed the whole of that work of Josephus, concerning *the wars of the Jews*, is the clearest and most unexceptionable evidence of the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecies.\* The particulars of the prophecies,

\* "The Historian was—one to whom the Pagans, the Jews and the Christians

and the event, have been compared by several Christian writers, but more especially by Bishop Newton, Dr. Lardner, † and Mr. Jortin. ‡

Our Lord also mentions the persecution of his followers, as what would precede that event. Matt. xxiv. 9, &c.: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.—But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

In connexion with this persecution and dispersion of his disciples, our Lord foretold that his religion would be preached in all the *world*, meaning, probably, the Roman empire, before this great catastrophe; and this appears from history to have been accomplished. Matt. xxiv. 14: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

The more immediate signal for the Christians to flee out of the country was the appearance of Roman armies, with their standards, and images (which were held in abomination by the Jews), in the holy land of Judea and in Jerusalem. Matt. xxiv. 15—21: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea, flee unto the mountains: let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The obscurity which there is in the terms of the first part of this prediction in Matthew, is, in a great measure, removed by the plainer expressions, corresponding to them in Luke xxi. 20—24: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is

could have no reasonable objection.—The service which he has done to Christianity was on his side plainly undesigned." Jortin's *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, 1751. I. p. 37.

† *Jewish Testimonies*. The article *Josephus*. Works. I. pp. 36—109, and in Watson's Tracts.

‡ *Remarks*. I. pp. 20—46, including remarks by Bishop Pearce, and pp. 72—89.

nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it, depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In these last words it is intimated, that the calamities of the Jews are to have an end, and that they are to be once more restored to the possession of Jerusalem. And from this, and other prophecies to the same purpose, we learn that this great event is to take place, when the gospel shall have been preached throughout the whole world, and when some, at least, of all nations, shall be converted to the profession of it. The apostle Paul says, Rom. xi. 25—27, "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery,—that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

At the time that our Saviour delivered this prophecy, there was far from being any appearance of its being accomplished. The Jews had been a long time in subjection to the Romans, whose empire then extended over almost all the known world, and was in its greatest strength; so that it could not have been imagined that so inconsiderable a people as the Jews were, would ever think of opposing them, and much less that they should hold out, till they were reduced to such extreme distress as our Lord has described. Still less would any man, not conscious of Divine inspiration, have ventured to foretell such a circumstance, as the circumvallation of Jerusalem, when, if they were reduced by the Romans, the conquest might have been effected by many methods more compendious than this.

Besides, there was not in our Saviour's time any example of a country being reduced to so great desolation by the Romans, and of so complete a dispersion of the inhabitants, as that which befel the Jews. The Romans were, in

general, merciful conquerors, so that the state of almost all the countries that were subject to them was considerably improved by that means.

Still less was it likely that so noble a structure as the *temple*, which was probably the most sumptuous and magnificent building in the world, would have been demolished, either by the Romans, who would have been proud of such a monument of their victory, or by the Jews, who had the most superstitious veneration for it; and it was so situated, as to be in no danger of being destroyed by a casual fire or any other accident. But, notwithstanding this, our Lord peremptorily pronounced that these things, improbable as they must have appeared, would not fail to come to pass in that very generation. Matt. xxiv. 34, 35: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

The successful propagation of the gospel, notwithstanding the opposition it was to meet with, and the grievous persecutions of those who adhered to it; also the deplorable corruption of Christianity, and the restoration of it after that corruption, in a very distant age, were all the subjects of prophecy by our Lord and his apostles; and most of them were events, which no man could have foreseen or expected, at the time in which the predictions were delivered.

The success of the gospel is certainly to be understood by what is said in the ancient Jewish prophecies concerning the great extent and glory of the Messiah's kingdom; but our Lord himself must have had a more particular view to it in several of his parables, as in that concerning the small grain of *mustard-seed*, which grew into a great tree; the small quantity of *leaven*, which leavened the whole lump; and many others, by which he professedly represents the wonderful spread of his gospel; and it must have been with the fullest assurance of this event, that he solemnly commissioned his disciples to *go and preach the gospel to every creature*.

It is not improbable, but that our Lord might speak prophetically, when he called himself the *light of the world*, and said, *No man cometh to the Father, but by me. No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him, &c.* If these declarations were meant to extend beyond the time and country in which they were delivered, the history of mankind affords a striking proof of the fulfilment of them; and the present state of the world makes it

exceedingly probable, that no people will ever attain to just and useful conceptions of God, &c. but by the gospel, and that by this means all nations will, in due time, acquire them.

That there was to be a great *corruption of Christianity* was expressly foretold not only in the book of Revelation, in which the rise, progress and utter destruction of some great antichristian power are most certainly described, but also in other writings of the apostles, and especially those of Paul; as 2 Thess. ii. 1—4: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

The coming of this antichristian power, he farther says, ver. 9—11, “is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.”

This apostle represents this corruption as having begun even in his time, though that monstrous antichristian power could not receive its full establishment till some other power, which was then in the way (by which he probably meant the Roman empire) should be removed. But whenever it should be established, he expressly foretells its utter destruction. Ver. 6—8: “And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

The particulars of this great corruption of Christianity are more distinctly expressed by the apostle Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, iv. 1—3: “Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that, in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of

*demons*; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

It is impossible not to perceive in these prophecies, especially if they be compared with others in the book of Daniel and of the Revelation, the plain characters of the *church of Rome*; allowing for the obscurity of many of the phrases by which the papal usurpations on the rights of God and man are here expressed. These prophecies have been fully accomplished, the Popish corruptions and usurpations having proceeded almost without interruption, for more than four-hundred years.\*

That so simple a religion as the Christian should have been subject to such dreadful corruption, must have appeared improbable, at the time of its first promulgation; the like not having happened to the Jewish religion, or, indeed, to any other religion under heaven. And yet when the corruption was established, and had been supported by all the temporal powers under heaven, for the space of many centuries, and was intimately incorporated with the civil constitutions of those states, its general restoration to its primitive purity must have appeared much more improbable;† and yet such progress has been already made in this great work, that there can be no doubt but that, in due time, the whole prophecy will be completed, and Christianity be once more what it originally was.

\* The Author had too well considered these *corruptions and usurpations*, to have confined their range during the last three centuries, within the influence of the *papal power*. On the question whether the Church of Rome be *exclusively* Antichrist, see Mr. Evanson's Letter to Bp. Hurd on his *Warburtonian Lectures*, 1777.

† See "An Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation by Luther. The Work which obtained the Prize on this Question, proposed by the National Institute of France, 'What has been the Influence of the Reformation by Luther on the political situation of the different States of Europe, and on the progress of Knowledge?' By C. Villers. Translated from the last Paris Edition, 1805."

## CHAPTER VI.\*

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF SEVERAL MIRACLES, WHICH HAVE BEEN SAID TO HAVE BEEN WROUGHT FOR OTHER PURPOSES THAN THE CONFIRMATION OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS.



WE shall be much confirmed in our belief of the miracles of Moses and of Christ, and of the truth of their religions, if we compare the evidence which has been brought for them, with that which is alleged in favour of other miracles. For miracles have been pleaded in favour of Heathenism, Mohammedanism and the church of Rome ; but the evidence which is alleged in their favour, though it has been boasted of by modern unbelievers, as equal, and even superior to what has been pleaded for the miracles of Moses and of Christ, is exceedingly defective, if there be any propriety in the rules which I have already laid down, for ascertaining the value of human testimony.

The number of false miracles which have gained credit in the world, posterior to those of Christ and his apostles, are, in some measure, an evidence of their truth. Mankind are easily led by analogy, from one thing to another ; so that having been compelled to admit the evidence of some miracles, they would more easily admit that of others, in any respects similar to them, (as their being wrought by the same kind of persons, and for similar purposes,) upon much more slender evidence ; whereas, if nothing had existed of the like nature before them, the evidence of which was indisputable, the later miracles would have gained no credit at all ; so that the credit which they have obtained is a kind of proof that something better authenticated had taken place before them. In like manner, spurious gospels, &c. are some proof that there were *genuine ones* prior to them.

It may truly be said of all miracles, not Jewish or Christian, that they were either not published to the world till long after the time in which they were said to have been performed, or not in the places in which they were said to have happened, or they were suffered to pass without exa-

mination, because they coincided with the favourite opinions and prejudices of those to whom they were reported ; or that it was the interest of priests or magistrates to favour the deceit. None of these miracles were performed in places where they must have been the most wanted, viz. in the presence of unbelievers ; and besides, they were of such a nature, as could answer no good end whatever, many of them a bad one, and the rest were whimsical and ridiculous, such as, we cannot but think, must have been altogether unworthy of the character of the Supreme Being. And yet, with respect even to the Popish miracles, which are only pretended to have been wrought in countries in which it is highly dangerous not only to make any inquiry into them, but even to hint the least suspicion of their truth ; Mr. Chubb scruples not to say, that they are better attested than any that are said to have been wrought in the first century, that is, by Christ and the apostles ; and the philosophical Mr. Hume expresses himself in a still stronger manner to the same purpose.

The pretended miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus have been set upon a level with those of Christ, by Hierocles and Philostratus among the ancients, and by Mr. Blount among the moderns.\* I shall therefore give a more particular account of them :

This Apollonius was a Pythagorean philosopher, contemporary with Christ, and remarkable, as it is said, for his temperance and many other virtues. It is affirmed, that he performed many miracles, particularly, transporting himself in the air from one place to another, and even raising the dead. He is also said to have ascended into heaven, and to have appeared to the Emperor Alexander.

But it certainly tends to discredit the story, that Apollonius had been dead, or translated, above a hundred years before Philostratus wrote, and that his history was compiled partly from the commentaries of one Damis, which were never published, but given to this writer by the Empress Julia, as *secret memoirs*, without any evidence of their being genuine ; and partly from the writings of Maximus Aeginensis, and Meragenes, the former of whom only wrote a few particulars ; and, according to the character given of him by Philostratus himself, was a very fabulous and romantic writer.

It is, indeed, said, that there were public monuments of

\* In his *Philostratus*, 1680. See Leland, D.W. I. p. 67.

some of the miracles of Apollonius, but they are also said to have been in distant cities of India and Ethiopía, where no writer pretends to have found them. Some letters of Apollonius are mentioned, but Philostratus owns that they did not relate to any of his miracles, but only to the curiosities of the countries through which he travelled.

The manner in which Philostratus writes, gives us but a very indifferent opinion of his own character, and his style is affected and extravagant, full of an ostentation of learning, and shewing a disposition to exaggerate every thing that could tend to the reputation of his hero.

Many of the miracles ascribed to Apollonius were said to have been done in secret, or before very few witnesses; some were self-contradictory, and others were evidently vain and foolish; and not a few of them appear to have been borrowed from the history of the Evangelists.

The occasion of Philostratus's writing seems to have been his desire to ingratiate himself with Julia, the wife of Severus, and with Caracalla the succeeding emperor, by detracting from Christianity, to which they both had a very great aversion.

Lastly, the story of these miracles presently died away, and the disciples of Apollonius were so few, that there is little reason to believe that he was, in any respect, so extraordinary a person as Philostratus pretended.

As to the *magical rites* of the Heathens, nothing could be more wicked or absurd. Nero shewed the most extravagant fondness for this odious and contemptible art, and sent for the most eminent professors of it from all parts of the world; but the issue of it was his own, and a general conviction of the folly of their pretences.

The Emperor Vespasian is said to have cured a blind and a lame man at Alexandria; and this, Mr. Hume says, is one of the best attested miracles in all profane history.\* But it may be easily collected from the accounts of the two historians who mention these miracles (neither of whom it is probable believed in them, and one of them evidently did not), that these extraordinary narrations were very convenient, in order to give weight to the authority of Vespasian, who was newly made emperor.

Mohammed himself did not pretend to any miracle, except the Koran itself; and that this was a divine composition, he does not pretend to give any positive proof,

\* Phil. Ess. X. p. 192, on Tacit. Hist. L. iv. C. 8.

but contents himself with appealing to its own excellence ; and it was probably superior to the poetical compositions of other Arabians of his time ; and this it might very well be, though written by himself, or his confidants. In the translation of Mr. Sale, who is allowed to have been a great master of the Arabic language, and who certainly meant to give it all possible advantage, it is, upon the whole, a very mean performance. The style of the Koran cannot be said to be comparable to that of many parts of the Old Testament, which, however, was never alleged as any proof of its divinity.

It does not appear that this only pretended miracle of Mohammed gained him any followers ; the propagation of his religion having been owing chiefly to the sword. Moreover, though the Mohammedan religion be very absurd, and unnaturally harsh in some respects, especially in the absolute prohibition of wine, it flatters men with the greatest indulgence in others, every man being allowed four wives, and as many concubines as he can keep ; and the future rewards of good Mussulmen are represented as being of a sensual nature. The great advantage which Mohammedanism had over the corrupt Christianity of the times in which it was published, was, that it asserted the great doctrine of the unity of God, against the Trinitarians ; but, in other respects, all who profess this religion are slaves to the most abject superstition. And yet Mr. Chubb says, that whether Mohammedanism be a divine revelation, or not, there seems to be a plausible pretence, arising from the circumstance of things, to stamp a divine character upon it.

Of all the Popish miracles, those which have been ascribed to the Abbé Paris are generally allowed to be the most credible. Mr. Hume boasts exceedingly of them, asserting that no where else can there be found such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact ; and that nothing can be opposed to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility, or miraculous nature of the events. He even says, that those miracles may be said, with some appearance of reason, to surpass those of Christ in evidence and authority. *Philosophical Essays*, p. 198, &c. Let us now consider a few circumstances which our philosopher seems to have overlooked, when he gave his judgment in this case.

At the time when these miracles were said to have been performed, there was a strong and numerous party in France, under the conduct of very able and learned men,

who were strongly prepossessed in favour of that cause which those miracles were calculated to support; and on the first rumour of them, they were eagerly cried up, and considered as the clear decision of heaven in favour of the Jansenists.

The character of this Abbé was such, as makes it highly improbable that any miracle should have been wrought by him, or in his favour. His whole life was a course of the most absurd and painful superstitions. He abridged himself even of the necessities of life, and was, in fact, accessory to his own death, by refusing proper assistance, and even better nourishment, when he was manifestly drawing near his end, in consequence of his extreme austerities.

By the manner in which Mr. Hume writes upon this subject,\* one would imagine that these miracles had never been contradicted, and that the evidence for them had never been disputed; and yet the fact is, that they were always suspected by most persons who heard of them; that the archbishop of Sens considered twenty-two of them as impostures; that the counsellor Montgeron, who undertook to confute him, gave up seventeen of these pretended cures, and defended only five; that M. Des Voux proved to him that he defended them very ill; that in the judicial proceedings upon the occasion, the falsity of many of these prodigies was demonstrated; that many witnesses absconded to escape examination; that others deposed that their certificates had been falsified, by the addition of circumstances which were not true; that many of the sick persons protested against the account which had been published of their cures; that many of those who had been subject to convulsions, confessed to M. De Heraut, the lieutenant of the police, that their convulsions were artificial; that the cures, true or false, were but gradual, and accomplished by several steps; that they were obliged to go nine times at least, and often more, to the tomb of the Abbé; so that the cures might very possibly be either the work of time, of a lively imagination, or of the medicines which they continued to take; that by far the greatest number of those who applied for a cure were disappointed; that it was very unlikely that the assistance of the Divine Being should not have been obtained but by means of convulsions, swoonings, violent, and some times very indecent

\* Phil. Ess. X. pp. 195—199.

gestures, which those who applied for a cure made use of; and lastly, that these miracles entirely ceased when no credit was given to them; and instead of drawing the Jansenists out of the low reputation into which they were fallen, they only served to make the whole party more ridiculous and contemptible.\*

Mr. Hume also mentions after the Cardinal De Retz, a miracle which was said to have been wrought in Saragossa; but, by Mr. Hume's own account, the cardinal himself did not believe it.†

The last instance I shall mention is one on which Mr. Chubb lays great stress, viz. a miracle said to have been wrought among the Camisards, or the Protestants in the South of France, and which he says cannot be distinguished from a real miracle. The principal thing that was exhibited upon this occasion was one Clary, seeming to stand, or dance about in the flames unhurt. The account was published by Mr. Lacy, an English gentleman, who joined the French Protestants, when they took refuge in England, from the depositions of John Cavallier, a brother of the principal leader of the Camisards,‡ but a person of an infamous character, who afterwards turned papist, and enlisted in the French king's guards.

But M. Le Moine, who answered Mr. Chubb's treatise on Miracles, in which this fact was mentioned, having taken some pains to inquire into it, found, upon the testimony of the most unexceptionable witnesses, especially that of one Serres, who had been a member of the privy council of the Camisards, that the whole business was a trick, contrived by themselves, in order to encourage their troops. This person, when near his death, gave a circumstantial account of the manner in which the artifice had been conducted; and the particulars, together with the proofs of the whole discovery, may be seen in M. Le Moine's treatise on Miracles, p. 420, &c.

\* Lettres de Roustau, p. 85, &c. P. Leland, D.W. II. pp. 108—134.

† Phil. Ess. X. pp. 193—195.

‡ Col. Cavallier who wrote "Memoirs of the Wars of the Cevennes." Translated 1726. "The name Camisard," he derives from a circumstance which happened at the siege of *Montauban*, where the Duke of Rohan's men "put their shirts over their clothes, thereby to know each other." He adds that some derive the name "from the Hebrew or the Greek." Mem. p. 158. Of Mr. Lacy and his connexion with the French *Prophets*, there is, an account from Dr. Calamy's M. S. Life, in Biog. Brit. III. p. 143.

## CHAPTER VII.

A VIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS TO THE  
JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN REVELATIONS.

IN the preceding sections I have given a general view of the evidence for the truth of the Jewish and Christian revelations, or the reasons which induce me to believe that the Divine Being has interposed in the affairs of this world, giving mankind laws and admonitions, with such sanctions respecting our future expectations, and especially our expectations after death, as we find an account of in the Scriptures; and I presume that such facts have been produced, as cannot be accounted for without supposing that these books contain a true and authentic history.

That testimony so copious, and so particularly circumstanced, given by such numbers of persons, who had the best opportunity of being informed, and who were so far from having any motive to impose upon the world, should, notwithstanding, be given to a falsehood, cannot be admitted, without supposing all those persons to have been constituted in a manner quite different from other men. And by whatever method of reasoning we dispute the authenticity of the books of Scripture, we may question the genuineness of all ancient writings, and invalidate the evidence of all history.

Such known facts of other kinds have also been produced, especially respecting the reception which the pretensions to Divine communications by Moses, by Christ and his apostles have met with, from persons who could have had no motive to admit them, except the fullest conviction of their truth, and also respecting the degrees of religious knowledge possessed by the Jews and Christians, who were far from having any peculiar natural advantage for the attainment of it, as cannot be accounted for without the supposition of their having had such Divine communications as they pretended to.

Lastly, not only have many remarkable events come to pass agreeable to predictions published in those books, but the *present state* of several considerable cities, of whole nations, and of the world in general, is such as was exactly

described in them, several hundred years ago; so that we cannot but have the greatest reason to expect the full accomplishment of all the other predictions, for which we have the same evidence that they came from God, and especially that which is the great object of the whole scheme of revelation, and to which, if we believe it, it behoves us to have constant respect, viz. that Christ will come again to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to give unto every man according to his works.

Notwithstanding this direct and plenary evidence for the truth of the Jewish and Christian religions, many persons, who have been extremely prejudiced, and consequently averse to receive them, either overlooking some of the more essential particulars of which it consists, or not fully comprehending it, have started several objections. I shall, therefore, distinctly mention, and briefly reply to the principal of them, especially such as are thought to be the most plausible, and which have the most weight at present.

## SECTION I.

### *Various Objections respecting the Old Testament.*

SOME of the most plausible objections that have yet been made to the system of revelation above-mentioned, affect the Jewish religion only. It is said to represent the Divine conduct in such a light, as is inconsistent with his known attributes of justice and goodness, particularly his express order to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, without sparing even innocent children; his command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac; and his direction to the children of Israel to borrow of the Egyptians, jewels, and other valuable things, without any design to return them.

Before I reply to each of these objections, I shall make a few general observations respecting them all.

To these, and all such like objections, the same general answer may be made as to similar objections to the justice and goodness of God in the natural world, where we see many things which we are not able to reconcile to those principles, as they are rules of human conduct, and there is no reason to expect that revealed religion should be more free from these objections than natural religion. On the contrary, we might expect, that, if both the dispensations have the same author, they would be so similarly constituted, as to be attended with similar advantages and similar difficulties. Now we see that, under the government of the

same God, the innocent are frequently involved in the same calamities with the guilty; the laws of nature being so framed, as to be only *in general* favourable to virtue, without making exceptions on account of individuals.

If the vices and follies of a nation, or of its governors, bring war, famine or pestilence into it, the righteous are not spared; storms, tempests and earthquakes make no distinction of virtuous or vicious; and innocent children suffer every day in consequence of the profligacy and debauchery of their parents. If, therefore, it be consistent with the Divine attributes to permit war, pestilence, famine or earthquakes, by which numbers of our race, of all characters, are promiscuously swept away, why might not the same Being commission the Israelites utterly to extirpate a nation abandoned, without hope of recovery, to the most abominable idolatries and wickedness? With respect to the Divine Being, there can be no material difference; and indeed there is very little, in any case, between *appointment* and *permission*, where there is a sufficient power of prevention. Also, as it is alleged, that the inequalities of common providence may be rectified in a future state, the very same may be said with respect to these special providences.

The great object of Divine government is the production of happiness; and as we see, in the ordinary dispensations of his providence, that temporal evils are, in many cases, inseparably connected with, and ultimately productive of good, we may presume that every thing to which similar objections may be raised in the course of his extraordinary dispensations, will, in the end, be seen to have the same advantages; and then they will stand perfectly clear of all objections. In the mean time, it becomes us (as we are obliged to do with respect to every thing that we have to complain of in the constitution and government of the natural world) to wait with patience, till we can see farther into the nature and uses of things than we can do at present. The reason why the rules of strict justice and veracity are binding upon us is, because it is the only way in which our mutual happiness, as social beings, can be promoted *by ourselves*. We have seen already that the most indispensable moral duties are, in fact, *means* to a certain end; and it is possible that, in some cases, a Being of infinite wisdom may gain the same great end, by what appears to us to be a deviation from any rules.

However, with respect to the case of the Canaanites, we may, I think, see great wisdom and propriety in their utter

extermination, in the manner in which it was accomplished by the Israelites. It might be highly expedient, and even necessary, for the instruction of that age of mankind, that the Divine Being should make a signal and striking example of a nation so far sunk into idolatry and corruptions of all kinds, as all the inhabitants of Canaan are said to have been ; and the hand of God would not have been so visible in their destruction, and consequently, the moral lesson would not have been so striking and useful, if it had been accomplished by a flood, an earthquake or any other natural means, as had been already tried in the case of the old world, and of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah ; whereas, the hand of God could not but appear when the punishment was executed by a people who received an express and manifest commission from him for that purpose ; and this could not but be evident, when all the passage of the children of Israel from Egypt to the land of Canaan, was conducted by a series of miracles, and when they were assisted by supernatural power in making their conquests. It was like the regular execution of a commission, by persons who carried their credentials or warrant along with them.

The particular reasons for the extirpation of the Canaanites, are clearly and repeatedly expressed in the books of Moses. Thus, in one place, the settlement of the Israelites in the Promised Land is said to have been deferred, because the iniquity of the inhabitants was not full ; and the Israelites are frequently reminded that the extermination of the Canaanites, and their own settlement in the country, were appointed by God, not on account of their goodness, but for the wickedness of those people who were driven out before them. It is remarkable that, in all the other wars in which the Israelites might happen to be engaged with their neighbouring nations, they were expressly enjoined to pursue very different and more humane maxims, sparing all except such as were found bearing arms. In this particular case, only, they were expressly commanded to *exterminate utterly*.

That the Israelites were not influenced by the usual passions of conquerors, but acted under an authority which controuled their natural desires, is manifest from their not sparing even the cattle, and even refraining to appropriate to themselves the treasure which they found in Jericho, which was the first-fruits of their conquests, and to be devoted to God. The Israelites have often been compared to barbarous conquerors and cruel murderers ; but let other

conquerors and assassins be produced, who refrained from plunder as these did. That they were not actuated by mere *rage* and *revenge* is evident from their having received no particular provocation, not indeed, having had any personal intercourse with the inhabitants of Canaan. Their motives, it is evident, must have been of a very different nature from those of common robbers and murderers, and, in the eye of reason, it is the *motive* that determines the nature of the action.

It is also remarkable that, notwithstanding the passion the Israelites may be supposed to have had for war, which would have been inflamed by the rapidity of their conquests, they were forbidden to extend them beyond the boundaries of the land of Canaan ; and the constitution of their government was altogether unsuited to extensive empire.

It would be a sufficient reason for the extermination of the Canaanites by the sword of the children of Israel, if, as is very possible, it was the best method of impressing the minds of the Israelites themselves with a just idea of the heinous nature of idolatry, and to make sufficient provision against their being seduced into the same abominable practices. If their living only in the neighbourhood of idolatrous nations was so unsafe for this people, as their history shews it to have been, what danger would they not have been in, if they had spared the old inhabitants of Canaan, and suffered them to live unmolested among them?

I would observe, however, that the order to exterminate utterly in the case of the Canaanites ; though expressed in absolute terms, is supposed by some to have been *conditional* in fact, and that their lives were to have been spared upon their submission, and especially on their forsaking idolatry.

This supposition is sufficiently anlaogous to other threatenings in the Scriptures (the nature of which is explained by the prophet Ezekiel xxxiii. 14), as that of Jonah against the Ninevites. He was commissioned to say, that *in forty days Nineveh should be overthrown*, Jonah iii. 4 ; and yet we see that, upon repentance, that city was spared.

It is plain, in fact, that the Israelites either did not understand the command to be absolute, or they knowingly transgressed it, even in the best and most flourishing state of their affairs ; for mention is made of the remains of the Canaanitish nations living in subjection to the Israelites, even to the times of the kings. 1 Kings ix. 20, 21 : " All the people that were left, of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, which were not of the children

of Israel, their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bond service unto this day." It is plain from this passage that, though before the days of David and Solomon, the Israelites could not entirely subdue those nations, they were then wholly reduced, and at the mercy of their conquerors; and we no where read of their being blamed for the favour they shewed them, as Saul was in the case of the Amalekites, who were reduced by war. We also read, Judges i. 28, "It came to pass that when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out." And it must be observed that Uriah, one of David's principal heroes, was a Hittite.

Besides, the *reason* and *end* for which the order for the extermination of the Canaanites was given, which was, lest the children of Israel should be enticed by them into idolatry, entirely ceased upon their submission, and abandoning their idol worship.

Lastly, it is pretty clearly inferred, that this order was conditional, from finding that if the hearts of the Canaanites had not been hardened to oppose the Israelites, they would not have been cut off. Joshua xi. 19, 20: "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel save the Hivites: for it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour; but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses;" i. e. evidently in case of opposition only. As to the Lord's hardening their hearts, there is nothing peculiar in it in this case, and it will be explained hereafter.

The orders which the Jews had, not to spare even their nearest relations, if they should attempt to seduce them into idolatry, has been made the foundation of the same charge of cruelty, and has also been censured as a persecution on the account of religious principles. But it should be considered, that the very reason for setting apart the Jewish nation to be the theatre of the extraordinary providence of God, respecting the whole world of mankind, which was at that time universally sinking into idolatry, was to secure the belief of the great and important doctrine of *the Divine unity*, and universal moral government; and that this, which was the great object both of the religious constitution, and also of the civil government of the Hebrews, would have been defeated, if the most effectual provision

had not been made for securing to the one true God the allegiance of this one nation, and their adherence to the purity of his worship.

Besides, it being absolutely necessary to the great purposes of the Jewish dispensation, that a special and extraordinary providence should constantly attend that people, making them prosperous and flourishing so long as they preserved the purity of their religion, and involving them in national calamity and distress, whenever they departed from it, the Israelites themselves would not have been fairly dealt with, if every possible avenue had not been guarded, against the introduction of so destructive an evil. And, after all, we see that, even these seemingly rigorous methods were not quite sufficient for the purpose, and that the Divine Being was obliged, as we may say, to teach his useful lessons to the world by the *punishment*, as well as *prosperity* of his favourite people ; but, in either of these cases, their *example* was of the same benefit to the world at large.

It should also be considered, that the idolatry of the ancient Gentile world, and especially that of the inhabitants of Canaan, was by no means a system of merely speculative *opinions*, but a course of the most atrocious and abominable *practices*, enjoining the cruel murder of numberless innocent children, as well as other human victims, and the most shocking lewdness, together with other vices of the most unnatural and detestable nature. And surely it becomes a wise legislator, to restrain the commission of such destructive vices as these.

As to the case of Abraham, with respect to the command he received to offer his son Isaac, it cannot, I think, be denied, that he who gave life had a right to take it away, and in whatever manner his infinite wisdom should see fit ; and if, for the trial of his obedience in so tender a point, he chose to make Abraham himself the instrument of it, instead of a disease, or what we usually call an accident, I do not know that it is inconsistent with any thing that we already know of the Divine conduct. Abraham, who had had frequent communications with God, could have no doubt concerning the authority from which the order came ; and, knowing the Divine power and justice, he might be satisfied that, notwithstanding all appearances, neither himself nor his son would be losers by their obedience.

Paul says, that Abraham knew that God was even able to raise Isaac from the dead, and indeed it is probable that this was the very thing that Abraham expected ; for the

promise that was made to him, of being *the father of many nations*, chiefly respected Isaac: *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*. If, therefore, Abraham believed this promise, he must have fully expected, either that God would not permit him to put his son to death, or that he would raise him from the dead; and, if he had not firmly believed the former promise, much less would he have regarded this harsh command.

It may also be observed, in order to lessen the difficulty which arises from this part of the Scripture history, that the Gentile world was, probably, about this time, falling into the horrid custom of human sacrifices; and that the Divine Being might choose to shew, in this instance, that though he had a right to demand such offerings, they were not pleasing to him, and he would not accept of them. Upon all other occasions he is represented as expressing the greatest abhorrence of such cruel rites, and his highest displeasure against all those nations who practised them. See Lev. xviii. 21. Deut. xviii. 10. Jer. vii. 31. Ezek. xvi. 21, xx. 26, 31.

I would observe farther, that, with respect to ideas of *right* and *equity*, the sentiments of those people who observed any particular fact, and who were to be instructed by it, should be chiefly considered. Now it cannot be pretended that any objection was ever made to God's requiring the sacrifice of Isaac, for the trial of Abraham's faith and obedience, till the present age, which is above four thousand years since the event; nor can it be made to appear that any bad consequence ever flowed from it.

Though the Israelites left Egypt loaded with the treasures of the country, the ungrateful usage they had met with, and the cruel and unjust servitude to which they had been reduced, and the recompense they were fairly entitled to, should be considered, in order to lessen the difficulty which might arise from the account of the method which they took to recover their right. But the word, which we render *borrow*, also signifies to *require*, or *demand*; and in the situation in which the Egyptians are represented to have been, willing to get rid of the Israelites at any rate, *lest they should all be dead men*, it may easily be imagined, that they would have been as ready to *give*, as to *lend* them, whatever they should have asked.

It is also said, that when they left the country, it was on a promise to return; but certainly that promise must have been cancelled by the hostile manner in which they were

pursued by the Egyptians. Besides, the use of stratagems, in order to free men from unjust servitude, is not considered as liable to much objection in the history of human affairs.

It is also objected to this part of the history, that God is said to have *hardened the heart* of Pharaoh, in order that he might do the very things for which he is expressly said to have been punished. But, in the language of Scripture, God is often said to *do*, whatever comes to pass according to the ordinary course of nature and providence; and therefore God's not interposing to soften the heart of Pharaoh, may be all that is meant when he is said to harden it.

Besides, it is sufficiently intimated, in the course of the narration, that the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, not by any proper act of God, but in consequence of its own depravity, and the circumstances he was in. For when the frogs were removed, we read, Exod. viii. 15, "that when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said." Pharaoh does not seem to have been more infatuated than the rulers of the Jews were, with respect to the murder of Christ; and yet nobody supposes that they did not, in that case, act naturally, or as their own evil dispositions prompted them.

It is said that, by the account of Moses himself miracles were wrought by the Egyptian magicians, as well as by himself and Aaron; and therefore that his miracles were no proof of a Divine mission. But all that Moses really says, is, that the Egyptians did, (by which he could not possibly mean more than that they *seemed*, or *pretended to do*,) by their arts and tricks, what he performed by the finger and power of God. The word which we render *so*, only means a *general similitude*, and by no means, necessarily, a *perfect sameness*, respecting both the effect and the cause. Nay, this very word is applied when the magicians failed of success. Exod. viii. 18: "They did so, to bring forth lice, but they could not," that is, they practised the same arts but in vain. Also the words which we render *enchantments*, &c. only signify *covered arts*, and *secret sleights*, in which the Egyptians are known to have excelled.

If the Egyptian magicians were really possessed of supernatural power, why did they not employ it to defeat the purposes of Moses's miracles, and relieve their country? More especially, why did they not guard themselves from the boils which are expressly said to have been upon the magicians, as well as upon Pharaoh, and the rest of the Egyptians. and why did they fail in the case of the lice?

The reason of this failure plainly appears, from the history, to have been, that, with respect to this miracle, they had no notice before-hand what they were to do, and therefore could not prepare themselves as before.

Pharaoh himself would naturally imagine, that the miracles of Moses were only such tricks as his own magicians excelled in, and therefore very properly called them in, to see whether they could do the same, and detect the imposition; and, so long as they could contrive to seem to do any thing like what Moses performed, it is no wonder that, circumstanced and prejudiced as he was, he shut his eyes to the evidence of the Divine power which accompanied Moses.

In fact, the Egyptian magicians themselves seem to have confessed, that there was nothing above the art and power of man in what they did, when, upon their failing to produce lice, they acknowledged that the *finger of God*, or, as it might be rendered, the finger of a God, or something supernatural, was in it.\*

It has been said that, in several respects, the present state of the world, and of mankind, does not correspond to what is said of the history of them in the books of Moses. But the more we understand of natural and civil history, the less weight there appears to be in all objections of this kind.

It has been said, that the peopling of America is inconsistent with the supposition of the derivation of the whole race of mankind from one pair. But it is now almost certain, that America was, in fact, peopled from the continent of Europe and Asia, and especially from the North-Eastern parts of the latter, which is found to be very near, and may perhaps have been joined to it. This is argued from a similarity in features, customs, vegetable and animal productions, &c.†

\* Even Calvin rejects the notion of diabolical agency in the case of the magicians, whom he considers as mere jugglers, deluding, by their sleights, the vision of the spectators. He says, "præstigiis luserant magi, ut Ægyptiis persuasum esset, divina virtute ad mutandas creaturas supra naturæ ordinem polleere.—Præstigationes illi nihil aliud quàm tenebras spectantium offuderant." *Institut.* L. iv. C. xvii. S. 15. Ed. *Genev.* 1602, p. 491. Rousseau depreciates the divine testimony from miracles, on the common notion that devils effected the works of the magicians. *Emile*, L. iv.

† There have been conjectures, that America was peopled by wanderers of the Ten Tribes. T. Thorowgood, M. A. one of the *Assembly*, published, in 1650, a piece entitled, *Jews in America; or, Probabilities that Americans are of that Race.* Wood *Athen. Oxon.* I. p. 844. The same opinion is sustained with some plausible arguments by an Indian trader, James Adair, in his "History of the American Indians," 4to. 1775. Joseph Mede started an hypothesis, scarcely worthy of his sound mind; "that the Devil" peopled America, after the advent of Christ, from "those barbarous nations dwelling upon the Northern Ocean—being impatient of the sound of the gospel and cross of Christ, in every part of this old world, so that

Objections have been made to the Mosaic account of the *creation*, and the general *deluge*. But even in these cases the history of Moses is found to supply a more probable hypothesis, to account for the present state of things, than any other that has yet been proposed; and improvements in philosophy do, upon the whole, rather strengthen than weaken this conclusion.\*

It is alleged, that the origin of the *Blacks* cannot be accounted for, on the principles of the Mosaic history. But there are several ways by which this fact may be reconciled with what Moses has advanced concerning Adam and Noah. If natural means be not thought sufficient to produce this effect, on a few individuals, in some early age, that change may have been produced supernaturally, though not mentioned by Moses; and the propagation of Blacks from Blacks, whenever that variety in the species took place, is allowed to be according to the common course of nature. The copper colour of the Americans, and the low stature of the Laplanders and Esquimaux, have also been alleged by unbelievers, but to as little purpose.

The objection to the Mosaic history of the *long lives of the Antediluvians*, and the gigantic stature of some of the inhabitants of Palestine, may be easily passed without any answer; because there is no contradiction in supposing it to be true, nor is it so very improbable that the state of mankind may have been very different in former times from what it is at present.

The history of the *fall of man* is said to have much the appearance of a fable. But it is sufficient for the purpose of revelation, if it be true in general, that the evils of the present state were not introduced till the sins of mankind made this state of labour and death appear to be the fittest for them. The fabulous circumstances may possibly have been introduced by the hieroglyphical manner in which that early history might be first written. But even the literal account may, in most particulars, have been true.

As to the history of transactions so much older than Moses, so general an account as he has given of them might very well have been transmitted through the few generations which preceded him, or it might have been communicated to him by revelation. This, however, is not very probable, since Moses nowhere asserts it; and he seems to be ex-

\* See Ray's "Physico-Theological Discourses," D. ii. C. 4, 4th Ed. 1721, p. 123. Also "Parkinson's Organic Remains of a Former World," 4to. 3 Vols. 1804, &c.

ceedingly exact in distinguishing all that he received from God, from what he relates of his own knowledge, or the information of others.

## SECTION II.

*Of the Objection to Revelation from the supposed INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES, and others of a similar Nature.*

SOME objections to the Jewish and Christian revelations are founded on small inconsistencies, and mistakes in the canonical books of Scripture. But such objections as these do not by any means affect the divinity of the system of religion which they contain ; because the contents of those books may be true *in the main*, notwithstanding such inconsistencies and mistakes. All historians, even those of the most approved credit, have been subject to small inadvertencies and errors. No history of Rome or England was ever written without them ; but do we therefore say, that there is *no* truth in them ? Nay, the discovery of such small mistakes is never imagined to affect the credit of the important facts.

Allowing, therefore, that, in the books of Kings, a prince is said to have reigned one number of years, and in the books of Chronicles another ; that one of the Evangelists speaks of *both the thieves* reviling Christ, whereas another says, that only *one* of them did it ; that in one of the gospels Christ is represented as purging the temple on the day that he arrived at Jerusalem, and that in another he is not said to have done it till the day following (and unbelievers do not pretend to have found any mistakes of more consequence than these), how do they invalidate the truth of the general history ? In reality, all such inconsistencies as these are so far from making it probable that the whole story is a fiction, that, according to the most established methods of estimating the value of testimony, they give the greater air of truth to every particular of importance in which they all agree. We see, in fact, that true history has always been written in the same manner, and without particular contrivance and combination, and consequently without a very strong suspicion of falsehood, histories of the same period, and the same transactions, could not be written otherwise.

Admitting, therefore, that the Evangelists were misinformed with respect to a variety of incidental circumstances, or even that they overlooked, or did not sufficiently attend to, some of such particulars above mentioned as might have

fallen under their own observation, are these things of such a nature, as to dispose any person to call in question the reality of the principal miracles, or their history of the death and resurrection of Christ? And without this, the *proper evidence of Christianity* is not in the least affected; because, if these important facts be true, we have still abundant reason to believe, that Christ will come again to raise the dead, and judge the world, which is the great object and end of our Christian faith.

The evidence for the truth of all the facts which are related by the same historian is by no means equal; because it will necessarily happen, that he will have a better opportunity of procuring authentic information concerning some of them than others. For this reason, the history of the infancy and childhood of Christ cannot be said to be as unexceptionable as the history of his most important miracles; and unless these leading facts be disproved, the religion of Jesus Christ stands unshaken.

As I think this consideration of some consequence to the evidence of Christianity, I shall exemplify my meaning, by referring my reader to the history of the *wise men*, who are said to have come from the East, in order to pay their respects to the new-born Jesus, directed by a miraculous light, in the form of a star, and also to the history of the death and resurrection of Christ. Both these histories are related by the same Evangelist, Matthew; but the evidence of their truth is certainly very different, though both of them may be strictly true. The former of them is related by Matthew only, who does not say that he could attest it from his own knowledge, or so much as intimate that he was an eye-witness to any part of the transaction; so that it is probable, that he had it from the report of others, and of how many others, perhaps, in succession, we cannot tell.

On the other hand, the history of the death and resurrection of Christ is related by three other Evangelists, as well as by Matthew himself; and from the circumstances of the facts, it appears that they must have been known to all the disciples of Christ, and to almost the whole body of the Jewish nation; and, moreover, a great number of incontestable miracles were wrought by all the apostles, and other primitive Christians, expressly in confirmation of the power and authority which was conferred upon Christ, and evidenced his resurrection. When, therefore, the evidence for the history of the wise men is so very small, (in comparison of the evidence for the history of the death and resurrection

of Christ, the former may be given up (though it is by no means necessary to do it) without in the least invalidating the evidence of the other.

When this manifest difference in point of evidence, with respect to facts related by the same Evangelists, shall be sufficiently attended to, our faith in the great and leading facts in the history of Christ, from whence we are led to believe him to be a teacher sent from God, and to expect his coming to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works, will stand much firmer, and will not be liable to be shaken by the exceptions which unbelievers are apt to make to some inconsiderable circumstances in the history of the Old or New Testament, the credibility of which is, in reality, of no moment whatever to the proper evidence of the Jewish and Christian revelations.

Christian divines having maintained the absolute inspiration of every word of the canonical books of Scripture, has been attended with very bad consequences, by laying the system of revelation open to so many insignificant, but plausible objections ; and this kind of inspiration is as needless, as it is impossible to be maintained. Besides, the inspiration of the original writers would have answered no end, unless every transcriber, and every translator of the books of Scripture had been inspired also ; because a failure of inspiration in either of these cases, would still have been a source of error and mistake. Small errors, and mistakes of various kinds, are unavoidable in all writings ; but since they are of no material consequence, there was no reason for guarding against them, even in the first instance.

Let us, therefore, read the canonical books of Scripture without expecting to find them perfectly unexceptionable in all the minutiae of things. Let us consider them as the productions of honest and faithful men, well informed concerning all the great things of which they write, but not equally informed with respect to every punctilio they mention. Let us consider the great truths which they deliver, as from God, to be divine, and worthy of our highest regard ; but when they *argue* and *reason*, either from facts or revealed doctrines, advancing opinions which are plainly their own, and for which they do not pretend to have the authority of revelation, let us consider them as the reasonings and opinions of men in their situation, and with their means of information, which were in general very ample and sufficient, but still left them fallible, and treat them accordingly. St. Paul says expressly, that some of the things which he

advanced were not from the Lord, but from himself only; and in other cases the nature of the things will help us to distinguish between them.\*

Many of the objections which have been made to revelation, have arisen from ignorance of the manners and customs of the Jews and other Asiatic nations; and others from an ignorance of the climate and geography of the country; but as the ancient manners and customs of the East have continued, with little or no change, to the present times, the travels which have of late been made into Judea, and the neighbouring countries, have been the means of bringing us better acquainted with them, and of removing the objections. Many happy illustrations of passages of Scripture, from travels into the East, may be found in an excellent work, intitled, *Observations on divers passages of Scripture from Voyages and Travels into the East.*†

Some objections to revelation are founded upon an ignorance of the *language* of the Scriptures, and of the phraseology which is almost peculiar to the oriental nations; and some unbelievers have been so exceedingly rash and precipitate in their censures, as not to have looked beyond the very words, or verses to which they have objected, when otherwise a child would have seen no difficulty.

M. Voltaire, in more than one of his pieces, represents

\* "Though all Scripture be of Divine Authority; yet he who believeth but some one book, that containeth the substance of the doctrine of salvation, may be saved: much more they that have doubted but of some particular books. They that take the Scripture to be but the writings of godly honest men, and so to be only a means of making known Christ, having a gradual precedency to the writings of other godly men: and do believe in Christ upon those strong grounds which are drawn from his doctrine, miracles, &c. rather than upon the testimony of the writing, as being purely infallible and divine, may yet have a divine and saving faith. Much more those that believe the whole writing to be of Divine inspiration where it handleth the substance, but doubt whether God infallibly guided them in every circumstance." *Baxter's Saint's everlasting Rest*, 4to. 1656. Ed. 6, Pt. II. C. 3, S. 2, p. 210, in *Le Clerc's* "Five Letters concerning the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures; translated out of the French, 1690." P. 202. See also Lowth's *Vindication* in reply to the *Five Letters*, 12mo. 1692, and *Philippo à Limborch Joannes Locke*, 6 Oct. 1685, in the *Familiar Letters*.

† In 4 Vols. 8vo. 1776 and 1787. Mr. Harmer does not appear to have mentioned, among his precursors, and perhaps never saw a much earlier publication with the same design, by an anonymous writer, who travelled into the East in 1702. His work is entitled "The Agreement of the Customs of the East Indians, with those of the Jews, and other ancient People: being the first Essay of this kind, towards the Explaining of several difficult Passages in Scripture, and some of the most ancient Writers, by the present Oriental Customs." 1705. P. 159. This writer had evidently thought for himself. On the enchanting of serpents he says, "Egypt which was the country that abounded most in *creeping things*, was also the most famous for this kind of *mysteries*. But whether this be done by the help of the *Devil*, or merely by some *secret causes in nature*, is a question that I dare not venture upon; for whatsoever side I should take, I shall certainly meet with a great many adversaries." P. 95.

the Jews as cannibals, and pretends to prove from Ezek. xxxix. 17—20, that God encourages them with the promise of feeding on the flesh of their enemies.\* But if he had read so much as the verse preceding, he must have seen that the whole passage was a fine apostrophe, addressed to the birds and beasts of prey, and was intended to express, in a very emphatical manner, a very great overthrow of the enemies of the Jews. “And thou son of man, Thus saith the Lord God, Speak thou unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice, that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.”

When, afterwards, this author acknowledges his mistake, as he does in a postscript to the above-mentioned treatise, he says, by way of apology for it, but contrary to all common sense, that two of the verses which I have recited might have been addressed to the Jews, as well as to the birds and beasts. What can we think of the fairness and competency of judgment, in this most distinguished of modern unbelievers, when he is capable of writing in this very absurd and unguarded manner?

### SECTION III.

*Some Objections which more nearly affect the PROPER EVIDENCE of Revelation, especially respecting the ancient and present State of the Belief of it.*

IT has been said by some modern unbelievers, that the books which were written by the early adversaries of Christianity have been suppressed by the friends of it, so that we cannot at this day tell what was written against, or objected to Christianity, at the first promulgation of it. But this is an assertion destitute of all proof, or probability; for then all

\* *Traité sur la Tolérance.* P. “Ezéchiel même leur promet pour les encourager, qu’ils mangeront de la chair humaine. Vous mangerez, dit-il, le cheval & le cavalier, vous boirez le sang des Princes.” Pp. 77, 78

Christian writers must have carefully avoided the mention of such books, in their own writings, which are come down to us ; whereas, they have been so far from doing any thing like this, that it is the opinion of critics, that almost the whole of Celsus's treatise against Christianity is transcribed into Origin's answer to it, and a great part of Julian's into that of Cyril. Eusebius has also preserved large extracts from the writings of Porphyry ; and the same has been the conduct of other Christian apologists, with respect to other opponents of Christianity.

No persons more sincerely regret the loss of these writings than learned Christians of the present age ;\* but in the same undistinguishing ravages of time, have perished what we regret more, namely, the writings of many early Christians, and ancient historians. Besides, how could it, in reason, be expected, that Christians should take any peculiar care of the writings of their adversaries. If those supposed writings had contained any thing *decisive* against Christianity, they would certainly (considering the very great advantages under which they were written, for the space of three hundred years) have effectually prevented the spread of Christianity, and would have preserved themselves ; whereas the universal neglect into which they fell is, if any thing, an argument of their futility, and furnishes a reason why we should comfort ourselves for the loss of them.

It has been said, that if Christ worked so many miracles as the evangelical history represents, healing all the diseased that applied to him, and in three instances raising the dead, he must necessarily have converted the whole Jewish nation, and all the strangers in the country ; as it could not but be concluded, that a man who controuled the course of nature must have the concurrence and assistance of the God of nature, and consequently a sufficient testimony of a Divine mission.

To this it is replied, that the preaching of Christ seems to have had all the effect that it could be supposed to have had, admitting his Divine mission. Great numbers of those who were of an ingenuous disposition, on whom evidence could produce its proper effect, did become the disciples of Christ, notwithstanding he persisted in disclaiming all worldly honours, and that character which they imagined to be inseparable from the promised Messiah ; an effect

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\* Mosheim. *De Reb. Chr. ante Const. M.* p. 561, in Lardner's Works, VIII. p. 3.

which nothing but the fullest and best-grounded conviction can be supposed to have produced.

With respect to the rest of the Jews, and especially the chief priests and rulers, it should be considered how incredulous, strong prejudices, and especially those which arise from vicious habits, usually make men. It was with the bulk of the Jews a fixed, though an erroneous persuasion, that the Messiah would assume temporal power, and deliver his country from the yoke of the Romans. This they imagined to be the specific character of the Messiah, as deduced from prophecies which they were convinced came from God. To the evidence of miracles, therefore, they would oppose that of the Scriptures, and, consequently, the miracles of Moses and the prophets, with which they seemed to be irreconcilable; and this, joined to their vicious habits, which rendered them extremely averse to the pure doctrines of the gospel, (having no idea that repentance was at all necessary to their being intitled to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, which they thought belonged to all the children of Abraham) must have rendered them extremely obdurate, with respect to the evidence of the Divine mission of Christ; so that it is not to be wondered at that so many of them persisted in their hatred and opposition to him, notwithstanding all his miracles.

Unhappily, also, the Jews were at that time infected with the notion of the power of demons,\* and evil spirits, and thought it possible, that, by a confederacy with them, Christ might heal those diseases which were usually ascribed to their power over mankind; and they had probably some similar method of accounting for the rest of his miracles.

After the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews had observed how thoroughly exasperated Jesus was against them, how he exposed all their pride and hypocrisy, and how little disposed he was to shew them any favour, it is no wonder that they were determined to reject him *in any character*, thinking the Romans better masters than such a Messiah as he would be with respect to them. Thus their fears and their interest together would lead them to oppose Jesus, at all events, whether he was the Messiah or not. The more reasonable and considerate among them might, however, be satisfied that God could not contradict himself, and that it was more probable that they had misinterpreted the Scriptures, than

\* "Which," according to Josephus, "are no other than the spirits of the wicked, that enter into men that are alive, and kill them unless they can obtain some help against them." J.W. B. VII. C. 6. S. 3. Whiston.

that the undeniable miracles of Jesus were not proofs of an authority to which they ought to submit.

With the modern Jews it should be a sufficient answer to this objection, that their ancestors frequently opposed Moses and the prophets, even persecuting and killing some of them, notwithstanding their allowed character of messengers from God.

To assist us to form a right judgment in this case, let us consider what would be the probable effect of preaching against popery, even with the power of working miracles, in Spain or Portugal, for the space of a year and a few months, which appears to me to have been the period of Christ's public ministry.\* In these circumstances, I should think, that to expect the immediate reformation of the whole country, strongly prejudiced as the people are known to be, would be to expect more than a just knowledge of human nature, and of the history of mankind would warrant. How many would there be who, not being in the way of the preacher, and not seeing the miracles themselves, would give no attention whatever to any *reports* concerning them; and who, being satisfied within themselves that the reports could not possibly be true, would obstinately persist in rejecting all evidence in their favour; and if these persons, as would probably be the case, were men of rank, and distinguished for their knowledge, it could not but have great influence upon the common people.

Upon the whole, it will hardly be thought improbable, that after such a person had opposed the superstition of an ignorant and vicious people, and had laboured to throw down the false foundation of their hopes of future happiness, they would endeavour to do by him as the Jews did by Christ. At most, his success could not be supposed to be much greater in proportion.

As to the miracles of the apostles, the same motives, whatever they were, that led the Jews to oppose those of Christ, would lead them to oppose theirs also; and the more, as they were now irritated by *opposition*, though the power of truth would make its way by degrees.

It is evident, that many of the most intelligent of the *Heathens*, especially Marcus Antoninus, would not give any proper attention to any accounts of miracles, so many things of this kind having been reported, which, upon examination,

\* See the Author's defence of Mr. Mann's Hypothesis, in the Theolog. Repos., his "Observations on the Harmony of the Evangelists," and his correspondence with Bishop Newcome.

appeared to be tricks or illusions ; though, had these men been satisfied that the course of nature had really been controuled, it cannot be supposed, but that they must have been convinced of the interposition of the Divine power and providence. Many of the Greeks and Romans, however, had a great opinion of the power of Magic, and, without considering the nature and circumstances of the Christian miracles, supposed them to have been performed by some such means.

If we consider the state of the Gentile world, and of Christianity in early times, we may very well account for the general rejection of it, without any impeachment of its truth.

The Gentiles in general, could not reconcile the idea of the ignominious death of Christ with the great power which his disciples ascribed to him. The more opulent and politer part of them were also disgusted, because the first proselytes to Christianity were generally of the lower sort, and many of them slaves, whom they held in extreme contempt, and with whom they could not bear the thought of associating. The Greek philosophers were exceedingly fond of their knowledge and eloquence, and disdained to receive instruction from such illiterate persons as the apostles and the primitive Christians in general were. They were also exceedingly offended at the spirit of Christianity, as being at enmity with all other religions ; they being of opinion that different modes of worship, and different religions, were even pleasing to the Gods.

The leading men in all the heathen states had a very high idea of the authority of the civil magistrate, and had always considered the business of religion as intirely subject to his controul ; and therefore thought that the mere *obstinacy* of the Christians, in refusing to submit to the laws, was, of itself, deserving of capital punishment. In this manner Trajan reasons in his answer to Pliny.\* Many of the Gentiles confounded the Christians with the sects among the Jews, whom they held in contempt : and, therefore, they would not so much as give any attention to their preaching or miracles. The common people considered all those who were enemies to their superstitions as *atheists*, and to this term the greatest odium was ever annexed ; and there are several proofs of their regarding the Epicureans, and the Christians

\* L. x. Ep. 98. *Si deferantur, et arguantur, puniendi sunt.* See Lardner. Works vii. pp. 294, and 320.

in the same light. Besides, Paganism had the advantage, which is common to every thing that has been long established, the sanction of *antiquity*; whereas Christianity was despised as a novel, and upstart thing.

We are not, however, to suppose that all the impression which the evidences of Christianity made on the minds of men, is to be estimated by the number of the declared converts to it, since many both of Jews and Gentiles entertained a favourable opinion of the gospel, but were unwilling to own it for fear of censure, ridicule and persecution, and hoped that God would overlook it, provided they did nothing in direct opposition to Christianity, and did not themselves join in the persecution of Christians.\*

It staggers some persons, that there should be so many unbelievers in the *present* age; but those who know the world, and the circumstances in which infidelity gains ground, will see nothing in it that is, in fact, unfavourable to the evidences of Christianity. It would be unjust to unbelievers to rank them all in the same class. I shall, therefore, endeavour to point out the different sources of infidelity in the present age.

A great number of those who profess to reject Christianity, are not only such persons as have never considered the subject,† or indeed have a sufficient stock of knowledge to examine it with proper attention, but they are also known to be, in general, men of profligate lives and characters; and surely it cannot weigh much, with reasonable and thinking men, that a thing is not believed by those who are so circumstanced, that they must necessarily be exceedingly prepossessed against the belief of it, and who are known, for that very reason, to have taken no pains to inform themselves concerning it. I do not think that I shall be deemed uncharitable in concluding, that a very great majority of modern unbelievers are of this class. Many, however, I readily acknowledge, are of a different character; but these, I dare say, will agree with me in my censure of the rest.

Others are men of fair and reputable characters, many of them men of taste and science, especially in Popish countries, who, taking it for granted, that what passes for Christianity is really so, or who, from a cursory inspection of the books of Scripture, conceive that some of the things related of God

\* Dr. Lardner describes them "as low-church Gentiles, though they were not Christians." Works vii. p. 305.

† The Author instances, in his Memoirs, the Philosophers with whom he conversed at Paris, and his Friend Dr. Franklin.

are unworthy of him, think it superfluous to attend to any discussion of its historical evidence. They also see that the writers of the books of Scripture have fallen into some inaccuracies ; that their narration is not, in all respects, perfectly coherent with itself, or that the different accounts of the same transaction are not altogether consistent with each other.

These men of genius may discover some things that are frivolous or weak in the discourses of the sacred writers, and some things inconclusive in their reasoning,\* especially in their quotations from, and their application of the Old Testament ; and taking it for granted, that, (as indeed the professors of Christianity have too generally and incautiously boasted,) the books which contain the history of our religion are as perfect as the religion itself, hastily conclude, that because the books of Scripture were written by men, and bear the marks of human imperfection, therefore the scheme in which they were engaged was wholly of men, and had nothing supernatural in it ; without reflecting that those very imperfections in the books of Scripture, at which they are so much offended, demonstrate that the writers of them were incapable of contriving such a scheme, or of procuring credit to it ; and also without reflecting that, on the very same grounds, they might reject the whole current of ancient history, no part of which has been written with perfect accuracy, uniformity, or even consistency. For here, as in the Scripture history, different historians agree in their accounts of the principal things only ; but as certainly differ in their accounts of lesser circumstances.

Men of taste and science are also exceedingly apt to be struck with the idea of what appears, on the first view, to be *rational* and *liberal* in their sentiments, and remote from *vulgar prejudices* ; and because the bulk of mankind are, in many respects, credulous, and often think very absurdly, these gentlemen, though they will not avow it, and indeed may not be sensible of it, are secretly disposed to reject what others admit, and to pride themselves in their singularity in this respect ; thinking it more great, noble and philosophical, to err on the side of incredulity ; whereas, they ought to consider that the understandings of all mankind being naturally similar, even the lowest of the vulgar, when lying under no prejudice, (and men of letters are subject to their peculiar prejudices as well as the illiterate,) must be as

\* See the Author's articles on this subject in Theolog. Repos.

capable of judging concerning *truth*, and especially concerning *facts*, as themselves ; that their opinions, if they are not true, are founded upon something analogous to truth, though the analogy may be faulty ; and therefore are not to be rejected at random, but are themselves an object worthy of philosophical investigation. A true philosopher will no more satisfy himself without endeavouring to trace the rise and progress of prevailing opinions, than without understanding the cause of any other *general appearance* in nature.

The opinion of men of letters, however, and of speculative persons of all kinds, will always have great weight with many who do not pretend to speculation. As they will not take the pains to think for themselves, they choose to think with *philosophers* rather than with the *vulgar* ; not considering that men of learning and genius, who are ever so capable of determining justly, have no advantage over the rest of mankind, unless they will carefully *attend* to a subject, and make themselves masters of it ; and that a politician might as well be expected to be an astronomer, or an astronomer a politician, as that a mere philosopher should be a competent judge of the evidences of Christianity, when his attention to them has been very superficial, if he have attended to them at all.

I will not deny that some unbelievers are *serious* and *inquisitive* men ; they even wish to find Christianity to be true, and have some secret hope that it may be so ; but they cannot fully satisfy themselves with respect to many objections which they have heard made to it ; so that the arguments in favour of it do not, at least they do not always, preponderate with them. Were a very great number of persons in this situation, it would be a circumstance, I readily own, that might afford a reasonable foundation for doubt, or at least for suspence ; but considering how very few these serious and inquisitive unbelievers are, in comparison with the numbers who are profligate and thoughtless among them, I think that no conclusion can be drawn from the consideration of it, unfavourable to the evidences of Christianity. For what cause is there so good and so clear, as that *every person* can be brought to join in it ?

Some of the persons above mentioned may have been much in the way of sensible and subtile unbelievers, to whose objections, through want of presence of mind, or of a sufficiently comprehensive acquaintance with the subject, they have not been able readily to reply ; or, being persons of weak and timid dispositions, they may have been led, by

their extreme anxiety, to give more attention to the objections which have been thrown in their way than to the plain and solid arguments in favour of Christianity; on which account only, the former may have made more impression upon their minds than the latter; whereas, if they had been more conversant with Christians and Christian writers, and less with unbelievers and their writings, they would have thought as well of the evidences of Christianity as of Christianity itself; objections which have been swelled into mountains in their imaginations, would have appeared no greater than mole-hills; and doubt and anxiety would never have invaded them. Besides, it is true, I believe, in general, that the things at which well-disposed minds stumble the most, are such as ought to give them no offence, being quite foreign to Christianity, though unhappily they have been generally deemed to belong to it.

Having considered *who*, and *how many* of the present age are unbelievers, let it likewise be considered if not how many, at least *who* are the believers.

With respect to the *ministers*, or professed teachers of Christianity, I am well aware, it will be said, that, besides the prejudices of education in favour of their religion, in common with the bulk of the people, they are *gainers* by the system, and therefore that they must be set aside as of no weight in the case. I am very ready to own that, in these circumstances, their mere *profession* of Christianity has no weight, because it is consistent with real infidelity; but, allowing them to be men of sense, study and inquiry, and withal men of fair moral characters, their *sincere belief* of Christianity certainly has *some* weight, especially in cases in which the gains of the profession do not place them much above the common level of their fellow-citizens.

Study and inquiry cannot but be allowed to be, in some measure, a balance to the prejudices of education; besides that, in numberless cases, this prejudice is much more than balanced by an opposite one, which is peculiarly incident to studious and learned men, viz. the affectation of being thought wiser than our ancestors, and free from vulgar prejudices. As to the emoluments of the Christian ministry, they are not so great as to be sufficient, in other cases, to induce an equal number of men, in similar circumstances, to wish to acquire them by the habitual and constant profession of a falsehood.

Setting aside the great dignitaries in the church of Rome or of England, many clergymen, in the latter of these esta-

blishments especially, who have had no great preferment in the church, men of reading and understanding, have written very able defences of Christianity.

If it be said, that these men, though but poorly provided for at the time in which they wrote, might have considerable *expectations*, and that several of them did, in fact, attain to great preferment in the church, in consequence of their defences of Christianity, this cannot be said of those *dissenting ministers* who have defended the same cause with equal zeal, and not less ability. What advantage did Foster, Leland, or Lardner, gain by the important services which they rendered the Christian cause? The two former, if I have been rightly informed, died poor; and the last, besides almost the whole of a very long life, spent a considerable part of his own independent fortune in the publication of his works.

If the evidence of such men as these must be set aside, nothing, surely, worth replying to, can be objected to the belief and defence of Christianity by such men as Locke, Newton, or Hartley; all men of sober minds, in no other respect the dupes of vulgar prejudice, least of all, those of education; all of them men of strict virtue and integrity, all of them men of the first-rate abilities, the two latter of them especially, infinitely superior to any of the advocates for infidelity. These men gave the closest attention to the subject, and they were masters of all the previous knowledge that is requisite to form a competent judgment in the case. They certainly could have no views of interest in their profession or defences of Christianity; and, as men of letters, would probably have gained, rather than have lost any thing, in point of general estimation, by espousing the cause of infidelity. For it can hardly be denied, that the works of such men as Mr. Hume and Voltaire have been much more read and admired in consequence of their being unbelievers, than they would otherwise have been.

It is not easy, for want of a sufficient knowledge of ancient and distant countries, to compare the state of the belief of Judaism and of Christianity with that of any system of Heathenism or Mohammedanism, which are deemed to be false both by believers and unbelievers of Christianity; but, as far as we are able to make this comparison, all the conclusion that can be drawn from it is certainly in favour of the Jewish and Christian religions. It will not be pretended, that so much as one philosopher, or man of letters, was a serious believer of any *Pagan system*, notwithstanding

their opposition to Christianity at its first promulgation. In Mohammedan countries there is at present very little reading or study; and, if we be not misinformed by some late travellers, those who are addicted to study, or who have any thing of a speculative turn, are generally supposed to be unbelievers. However, nothing written against their religion was ever read or heard of in any Mohammedan country.

Upon the whole, I think we may conclude, at least fairly presume, that no imposture has ever stood such a test as Christianity has already stood, without being exploded; and, notwithstanding the spread of infidelity at present, yet, considering among whom it spreads, and who they are that oppose the spread of it, it can hardly be doubted, by an indifferent spectator, but that the belief of Christianity, so far from being in any danger of becoming extinct, will maintain its ground, and continue to be the serious belief of the virtuous, the sober-minded and the learned of the present and future ages; and this will be an omen of its finally triumphing over all opposition, and of the belief of it coming at length to be universal and undisputed.

Sincere Christians have no more reason to be shocked at the prevalence of infidelity in the present age, than at the prevalence of *evils* in general, or of *vice* in particular. There can be no doubt but that evils of every kind answer the best of purposes in the system of God's moral government, and that they are a very important part of that most admirable *discipline*, by which mankind are training up to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue. Nor do I think that it requires any great depth of judgment, or knowledge of human nature, to perceive this.

Supposing it to be the intention of any person to form a proper number of truly great, excellent and generous minds, he must place them in a world not less abounding with calamity, and even with vice, than this. There could be no dependence either upon the *genuineness*, or the *stability*, of that virtue which had not been formed, and exercised, in such circumstances.

In like manner, the most rational and the most steady believer in Christianity, is the man who has heard and considered all the serious objections that unbelievers can make to it, and who has also been exposed to the ridicule with which it is treated by those who have the reputation of men of sense, and of being free from vulgar prejudices. The man who has passed through this trial, whose faith has not

been shaken, but has been more firmly established by the reasonings of unbelievers; who has not been made ashamed of his profession by the ridicule and contempt to which it has exposed him, but who can be content to be ranked among the *fools* and *narrow-minded*, by the celebrated free-thinkers of the age, in a firm belief of, and patient waiting for that day, which shall *confound the wisdom of the now reputed wise*, is a Christian of a higher rank, and greater value, and is more to be depended upon for acting a truly Christian part (which requires superiority of mind to this world, and to the vain pursuits and transitory emoluments of it), than the man who has only been taught to take the system for granted, and who is unacquainted with the proper evidence on which his faith rests.

Moreover, as those who believe in the perfect moral government of God entertain no doubt, but that all calamity and vice will be made to cease, when they have answered the purposes for which they were permitted to exist; so the Christian looks forward with joy to that time, when the religion of Christ shall triumph over all opposition, when the firm belief of it will be universal, and when, in consequence of this, being more deeply rooted in men's hearts, it will bring forth the proper fruits of it in their lives and conversation.

When these things are duly considered, I hope that the present state of the belief of Christianity will afford no just foundation for any objection to it, but that it will rather supply an argument in favour of it.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *Miscellaneous Objections to the System of Revelation.*

THE *want of universality* can be no objection to the truth of Christianity; but upon the supposition of the knowledge of it being absolutely necessary to the final happiness of men, which is denied by all rational Christians, who believe that all men will be judged according to the advantages which they have severally enjoyed for attaining to the knowledge of truth, and the practice of virtue; and consequently that the most ignorant and idolatrous Heathen may meet with more favour from his judge than many professing Christians, whose conduct, though, to outward appearance, it has been much better, yet not in proportion to their greater advantages.\*

\* See Young, *Idol. Cor. II.* pp. 258, 254, and Law's *Theory*, pp. 36 & 200.

It is greatly favourable to Christianity, and indeed almost peculiar to it, that it shews no favour to Christians as such. The bigotted Jews and the Mohammedans denounce anathemas against unbelievers as such, and suppose that the wicked among them will be more respected by God hereafter than the rest of mankind, whereas the gospel speaks quite another language. To those who say *Lord, Lord*, without submitting to the laws of Christ, he will reply at the last, *Verily, verily, I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* It is also one of his maxims, that *he who knows his Lord's will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* To the same purpose, likewise, do the apostles write.

Some persons have objected to the evidences of Christianity, but certainly without sufficient reason, the *differences of opinion* among Christians, since the very same objection may be made to natural religion, and indeed to every thing that has ever been imagined of so much *importance* as to engage much of the *attention* of mankind, the consequence of which has always been different conceptions concerning it. Were not the disciples of Socrates, Aristotle and Plato divided among themselves? Are there not as many sects among the Mohammedans as among the Christians? And are there not almost as many different opinions among the Papists as among the Protestants, notwithstanding they profess to be possessed of an infallible judge in all controversies of faith? Do not even our ablest lawyers give different opinions concerning the sense of acts of parliament, which were intended to convey the most determinate meaning, so as to obviate all cavils? Nay, have we not equal reason to expect that unbelievers should agree in the same system of unbelief? If they say to us, Agree first among yourselves, and tell us what Christianity is, and we will tell you what we have to object to it; we have a right to reply, Do you agree first with respect to what you suppose to be wrong in it, tell us what you object to, and we will then consider of the proper answer.

In fact, every unbeliever must read the New Testament for himself. If, when he is uninfluenced by any criminal prejudice, he really cannot give his assent to what he believes to be the religion of those books, he will be justified in his unbelief; but if he have taken up his notions of Christianity from others, or from an examination of his own, inadequate to the importance of the subject, he certainly cannot be justified. I, for my own part, can only exhibit what appears to me the true idea of Christianity, and the most rational

defence of it. If any other person, believer or unbeliever, think it to be exceptionable, he must look out for another, that to himself shall appear less so ; and I also shall think myself at liberty to relinquish my notions, and adopt his.

It is highly unreasonable to object to Christianity the various *mischiefs* which it has indirectly occasioned in the world, since there is nothing useful or excellent that has not had similar consequences. By this method of reasoning, it might be concluded with certainty, that our *passions* and affections were not the gift of God; for they are daily the cause of great and serious evils. In fact, the more important any thing is, and the more extensive and happy are its consequences, the greater, in general, are the evils which it occasionally produces.

This is remarkably the case with *civil government*. It is certainly far preferable to a state of anarchy, and yet it gives occasion to a multitude of crimes, and such horrid excesses of all the passions as cannot be known in uncivilized countries.

The persecution of Christians by Christians has not been worse than the persecution of Christians by such Heathen Emperors as Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, not to mention Nero or Diocletian ; and has, besides, most evidently arisen from a gross perversion of the genuine spirit of Christianity, which breathes nothing but forbearance and love. There is also a view in which all these evils may be considered as highly favourable to the evidences of Christianity, since they were distinctly foreseen and foretold by Christ and the apostles. Besides, when we consider the havock that has been made by Christian persecutors, we should also consider the laudable zeal of the many who favoured and sheltered those who were persecuted.

To make a juster estimate of the moral influence of Christianity, let us consider with impartiality the character of the present times. Was Europe less corrupt a century ago, when there were fewer unbelievers, than it is now that they are more numerous ? It is plain, from experience and observation, that the most vicious and abandoned of the present age are professed unbelievers, and that the most strictly virtuous, those who are the most strenuous in their opposition to the progress of vice, are professing and zealous Christians. Let it also be considered whether any more humane and enlarged sentiments were entertained before the promulgation of Christianity in Heathen countries. Now, whatever may be said in favour of the virtuous and

humane sentiments of the Heathen philosophers, it cannot be pretended that they exerted their eloquence in favour of toleration for the poor persecuted Christians. On the contrary, they generally exerted their influence to make them ridiculous and odious. The moderation of the present times is certainly owing both to the unbelievers and the Protestants, and both were perhaps led into it by the consideration of their own circumstances, as the weaker party.

It is plain, from fact, that it was not the intention of the Divine Being, by means of natural or revealed religion, of any kind of knowledge, or any other advantage of which we are possessed, to establish a state of universal virtue and happiness in the present world. In all the Divine dispensations we are treated as accountable or improvable creatures; but it is evidently necessary to such a state, that we be capable of growing worse as well as better, by every species of discipline; and the very same circumstances may produce both these different effects on the minds of different persons. The same prosperity that excites sentiments of gratitude, and a liberal, beneficent disposition in some, inspires others with insolence, rapaciousness and cruelty; adversity also may be the parent either of industry or fraud; so that neither of them has necessarily and invariably a good effect upon the mind. The dispensation of the gospel, therefore, may be similar to this, without any impeachment of its Divine original.

The evidence of truth may also come under the same rules with the means of virtue, and thus the arguments in favour of Divine revelation may be sufficient to convince the candid, impartial and well-disposed, at the same time that they may afford those who are of a different disposition handles enow for cavilling, such as, in their state of mind, will justify their rejection of it to themselves. To this our Lord might possibly allude when he said, John ix. 39, "For judgment I am come into this world: that they who see not, might see; and that they who see, might be made blind:" and, John vii. 17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." To the same purpose is the prophecy of Simeon, Luke ii. 34: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against."

It is often taken for granted, that the design of revelation in general, and of Christianity in particular, was simply *to reform the world*; and that end not having been completely

answered by it, it has been objected by unbelievers, that it could not have been from God, who would certainly have chosen sufficient means to gain all his ends. But, considering that men are accountable creatures, and capable of abusing every advantage of which they are possessed, both reason and revelation do, in fact, in all cases, answer the end for which they were given, whether they be abused or improved; whether, as the apostle Paul says, they be *a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.*

I shall conclude these observations on the difficulties which attend the Jewish and Christian revelations, with remarking, that the question is not, whether any of the particulars I have mentioned, separately taken, be likely or unlikely to come from God, but whether *the whole system*, attended with such difficulties, may be Divine. If it were possible that any person should be asked, *a priori*, whether it was probable that, under the government of a wise and good Being, an innocent child should inherit the diseases, poverty and vices of its parent, or whether no distinction would be made between the righteous and the wicked in war, pestilence, famine or earthquakes, he would certainly answer, it was not probable; though when he should come to know, and attentively consider the whole system, of which such events make a part, he might be satisfied that it was the result of perfect wisdom, directed by infinite goodness; and even that a scheme more favourable to happiness or virtue could not have been formed; and the time may come, when we shall know and acknowledge the same with respect to the *extraordinary* that we do with respect to the *ordinary* dispensations of the Divine Being.

The advantage which Christianity derives from the objections of unbelievers, is various and considerable. This circumstance has been the means of purging it from what was foreign and indefensible, and also of setting its evidences in a clearer and stronger light; so that many persons who before took their religion upon trust, do now adhere to it upon a rational conviction of its truth and excellence, and hold it in greater purity than they would otherwise have done. And as the Heathen philosophy contributed to discredit the popular religions of the Gentile world, which served as a preparation for the promulgation of the gospel, so the writings and discourses of unbelievers in the present age seem to be sapping the foundations of the Popish corruptions of Christianity, and preparing the way for the establishment of the pure religion of Christ in their place.

Christianity, after having stood such a trial as this, will no more be exposed to such virulent attacks as before, but will acquire such a *fixed character of truth*, as it could never have obtained without the opposition which it has met with. Such has been the fate of all the branches of true philosophy, of the Copernican system, the Newtonian theory of light and colours, and the Franklinian theory of electricity.

## THE CONCLUSION.

It is in vain to say any thing by way of address to persons who will not read or think upon a subject. To the profligate and unthinking among the unbelievers I shall, therefore, say nothing, because they will not give themselves the trouble to read what I might be disposed to say to them; but to the more *moral, speculative and thoughtful* unbelievers, into whose hands this treatise may possibly fall, I would observe, and they must agree with me in it, that, in justice to themselves and to the subject, they should give it the most serious and deliberate examination. To men of reason and reflection, the evidences of Christianity must appear the most interesting of all subjects of inquiry: for what can be more so than fully to ascertain, that the present state is not the whole of our existence; but that Jesus Christ, by the appointment of God his Father, will come again to raise all the dead to a future, endless life, and to give to every man according to his works? This is the great object and end of Christian faith; and those who believe this important doctrine, receive it on the authority of Jesus Christ, whose Divine mission was attested, as they believe, by such miracles as no man could have performed, without the presence and concurrence of God.

Now, before any person seriously rejects Christianity, containing such important doctrines, he should certainly endeavour to satisfy himself, at least, on what foundation it is that he founds his dissent; and that such persons may more easily and effectually interrogate themselves upon the subject, I shall briefly propose a few leading questions, which may perhaps assist them to ascertain the state of their own minds, and lead them to such reflections, or disquisitions, as may be of most use to them with respect to it;

at the same time that they may serve as a kind of *recapitulation* of a few of the principal arguments in favour of Christianity.

Is it not an indisputed fact, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, in Judea?

Is it not also a well-known fact, that he had some followers when living, but, notwithstanding his ignominious sufferings, which disconcerted and dispersed all his adherents, many more after his death; and that he was even acknowledged by them to be the Messiah, foretold by their ancient prophets, though he sustained a character the very reverse of what was expected by all the Jews, the good as well as the bad?

Are not the *gospels*, and the book of *Acts*, which contain the history of the life of Christ, and of the propagation of his religion in the world, authentic writings? Were they not considered in all the early ages, both by the friends and enemies of Christianity, as the genuine productions of the early disciples of Christ?

Can this be admitted, without admitting, also, that what they relate concerning Christ and his apostles is, in the main, true; at least that they did something above the power of man; especially, that Christ did actually rise from the dead, as he had foretold, and as a proof that what he taught, he had by commission from God?

Is it probable that such men as the apostles were, should have been able to shake off the strongest Jewish prejudices, which no other Jews, whether, with respect to morality, they were good or bad men, were ever able to do? Can they be supposed capable of inventing such a story, and especially of making it gain credit with the world, in such an age as that in which they lived, and circumstanced as they were for that purpose?

Admitting this to be possible, can any sufficient *motive* be assigned, to induce so many of them, not only to enter into a scheme of this nature, but, what is much more, to carry it on, with a perseverance unknown to the professors of any scheme of religion before them, in the face of all difficulties that could be thrown in their way, and to die with all the marks of joy and confidence, without ever confessing the imposture?

• If the leading facts above-mentioned cannot be disputed, except upon such principles as must invalidate all ancient history, and set aside all human testimony, every argument

*a priori*, such as those which arise from the consideration of the sufficiency of the light of nature, the natural incredibility of miracles, &c. will certainly not deserve a hearing. How specious soever they may be represented, their influence will not be felt.

It will be clearly perceived that, whether it might have been reasonable to expect it or not, God who made the world has *actually* interposed at various times in the government of it; giving some of his creatures, at least, such information respecting their conduct here, and their expectations hereafter, as he judged to be useful and convenient for them;\* and whatever difficulties may attend the speculative consideration of a future life, it will not be doubted but that we shall *in fact* live again, give an account of ourselves to God, and receive according to our works.

\* "The first race of men had so much knowledge imparted to them, most probably by God himself, as they could either then want, or well be capable of; so much as they had either means or leisure to employ; and higher notices, could they have been attended to, would, we conceive, rather have disturbed, and rendered them uneasy in their then situation; and tended to disqualify them for their more immediate occupations, in that part of life.—To preserve an intercourse with the Divine Being, it is likewise probable that they had positive directions about consecrating to him some part of their goods, together with the times, and places for presenting this before him; by way of acknowledgment of his present bounty, and application for the continuance of it; and also in deprecation of his displeasure whenever they became sensible of having incurred it by abusing that bounty; and lastly, as a settled, stated means of always having access to him, and finding acceptance with him.—At length came the art of alphabetical *writing*, which drew along with it all the rest; helping at once to spread, and to perpetuate them. And it is worth observing, that about the same time, more frequent, and more full revelations were communicated to the world; which thereby became better qualified to receive, preserve, and convey them; as they were likewise dispensed in a way best suited to its own state; and which most effectually supplied its wants, and tended to give greater light and improvement both to it, and one another.—To these, in its proper season, succeeds *Christianity*: which surpassed them all, as much as the times of its promulgation were superior, in all kinds of knowledge, to the past." Law's *Theory*, pp. 238—242. On *Letters*, an immediate Divine communication, see "Essay upon Literature, proving that the two tables written by the finger of God in Mount Sinai, was the first writing in the world," 8vo. 1726; "Winder on *Knowledge*," 4to. 1756, II. pp. 30—55; "Conjectural Observations on Alphabetical Writing," 8vo. 1772, and Wakefield "On the Origin of Alphabetical Characters," 1784, enlarged in App. to his *Mem.*, 1805. Mr. Astle on the "Origin and Progress of Writing," maintains the contrary opinion. See New Ann. Reg. V. p. 172.

## APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

## AN ESSAY\*

ON THE

ANALOGY BETWEEN THE METHODS BY WHICH THE PERFECTION AND HAPPINESS OF MEN ARE PROMOTED, ACCORDING TO THE DISPENSATIONS OF NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION.

THE perfection of intelligent beings consists in *comprehension of mind*, or that principle whereby ideas of the past and the future mix with those of the present, and excite one common sensation: in which the good and evil so perfectly coalesce, and are so intimately united, that the *medium* only is perceived. Consequently, if happiness be apprehended to prevail, in that portion of time of which we have this perfect comprehension, and every part of which may be said to be *present* to us, we are conscious of pleasure only in the contemplation of it, the pain being lost, and absorbed, together with so much pleasure as was equivalent to it. By this means happiness comes to be of a more stable nature; and it is less in the power of single accidents to produce a sense of misery.

If we have any reason to think that our existence will, upon the whole, be comfortable and happy; since (man being immortal), our happiness must be infinite upon the whole, though it be limited and finite at any particular time, the thought is so great and so glorious, that the full apprehension of it must contribute still more to overpower the

\* First published in 1771, in the Theological Repository, III. with the following introductory letter to the Editors, p. 3: "Gentlemen,—If the inclosed essay suit your purpose, it is much at your service. It is hoped, that those of your readers who are of a philosophical turn of mind will not think it too *abstruse*, or that there is too much *refinement* in it. If it stand clear of these objections, it will be found to contain a presumptive argument in favour of the scheme of Revelation, which I have not seen illustrated by any writer, whose works have fallen into my hands. It is acknowledged not to be sufficient to produce conviction in the minds of unbelievers; but it is hoped, that it may give some additional satisfaction to those who are already the lovers and friends of revealed religion. I am, Gentlemen, Yours, &c.

sense of any present evils, and give such an intenseness to all pleasurable feelings, as cannot fail to make our present state unspeakably more eligible than it could otherwise have been.

Such is the constitution of human nature, and such are the influences to which we are exposed in this world, that this comprehension of mind must necessarily be enlarged with the experience of every day. Infants are sensible of nothing but what passes in the present moment. The instant that the impression of actual pain is removed, they are perfectly easy in mind, not being disturbed either with the remembrance of the passed, or the apprehension of the future. By degrees, ideas, which have frequently been present to the perceptive power at the same time, begin to be associated; so that one of them cannot occur without introducing the other, and so making the perception complex. By this means *expectation* begins to awake in the infant mind; but still, from the moment that, by the intervention of an associated circumstance, the idea of any pleasure is conceived, the child is impatient till it be enjoyed. Indeed, it is generally several months before children shew the least sign of patience in waiting for any thing. The most evident signs of preparing to give them food, serve only to quicken their appetite, and their impatience to get it satisfied; nor are they easy, till the meat be actually in their mouths.

In this state, therefore, or at our entrance upon life, we are influenced almost wholly by sensation, or the actual impression of external objects upon our senses. But when traces of these impressions, i. e. *ideas* are left in the sensorium, which may be excited by other ideas associated with them, so that notices of things may be had without the presence of real objects, we are capable of being influenced by them, as well as by the objects themselves. And since the stock of our ideas increases without limits, and is accumulating through the whole course of our lives, we must be continually more and more actuated by them; and there will be less occasion for the presence of external objects, either to rouse us to action, or to give us the sense of pleasure or pain; that is, we grow more intellectual, and less sensual every day.

When our stock of ideas is become considerable, and, consequently, their mutual associations are pretty extensive and intimate; if the circumstances that have always been found to precede any gratification be perceived, the gratification

itself is immediately anticipated ; we look upon it as certain, and have a real enjoyment of it, though it be not present. In this case, when the gratification actually comes, it makes but little alteration in what we feel, and is but a small addition to our previous happiness ; which now depends chiefly upon ideas, which are continually increasing, and to which external sensations bear, every day, a less and less proportion.

The probable expectation of happiness hath a similar effect : and hence the great power of mere *hope* to lessen the evils of life, and make us bear up under great difficulties and trials. If any pleasure hath been absolutely depended upon, for a long space of time, the happiness we have experienced in the frequent contemplation of it, may far exceed that of the enjoyment, which is single and momentary, and, moreover, accompanied with the disagreeable idea of its being so. For the same reason, the fear of evil may, in time, be far more distressing and grievous than the evil itself. The man who loses a limb by a sudden accident is to be envied, in comparison of him who hath been sentenced to that loss, as a punishment, some months before the operation. In like manner, if two persons be confined in prison, and one of them be released without any previous expectation of so agreeable an event, while the other knew that he was to be confined only for the same limited time ; the former will feel more tumultuous joy upon the occasion, but the latter will have had the idea of it present to his mind, during the whole time of his confinement, sweetening all the bitterness of it, and will never have known the distress of uncertainty, or the agony of despair.

When ideas only are concerned, and not both ideas and sensations, the influence of hope and fear is much more distinctly perceived, and the nature of this comprehension of mind will be better understood by it. Instead, then, of putting a case in which we ourselves are concerned, let us put the case of a wife, a child, or any other near relation or friend, with whom we can truly sympathise, taking part in all their joys and sorrows. If we see them in prison, and, after apprehending that their confinement will be for life, have private information that they will be released, and placed in very agreeable circumstances in a few days, weeks, or months ; we can see them in the mean time, even though we are not allowed to communicate our intelligence to them, with joy almost unmixed ; because the future is realized, and the agreeableness of it heightened in our ideas by its

contrast with the present ; which, being temporary, is overlooked by us, as nothing, and has not power to damp our satisfaction.

If my child be peevish and obstinate, and I be sensible that pain and mortification will do him good, I can, without the help of much anger, have a kind of satisfaction in inflicting it, and have little or no sympathy with what he suffers ; though, for a time, he be in an agony of distress, and think very unkindly of me. On the other hand, if I foresaw that he would lose a limb in a few days, weeks, or months, I should look upon him in the mean time with a most painful compassion, notwithstanding he himself should be ever so happy, and enjoy himself ever so much ; nay, the want of apprehension and feeling in him, would sharpen their painful effects in me.

The effect is nearly the same if, with respect to ourselves, impressions from the external senses be left out of the question, and a case be put, that is purely intellectual. Suppose, for instance, my character be unjustly traduced, and, for a time, I be reckoned a most infamous scoundrel ; yet, if I be certain, that in a few days my innocence will be effectually cleared, so that no person whatever will entertain the least doubt of it, shall I, in the mean time, be affected and mortified, with the sense of my disgrace ? No, I shall hardly feel it at all, but shall rather secretly exult in the future triumph of my innocence, and shall shew an unabashed and cheerful countenance, till the present load of infamy be removed. It must be owned, however, that the sense of infamy, in this case, will be felt more or less, according to the degree of comprehension of mind to which we are arrived, and also that we shall be able to bear unjust scandal for a longer or shorter space of time in the same proportion.

The same observation may also be made with respect to all the cases mentioned above. Thus it is that, by this power of comprehension, we are able to balance one idea or sensation with another, whether they be of the same, or of different kinds. With this resource, a good man, conscious of his own integrity, grows every day less sensible to the censures of men, consoling himself with the approbation of his own mind, and the persuasion that he enjoys the favour of his Maker ; till, after sufficient experience, this just sense of things will make him almost wholly indifferent, on his own account, to every thing that the world can think or say of him.

A certain degree of this comprehension of mind, employed

about proper objects, is sufficient to make a man virtuous through the whole course of his life. To arrive at this, nothing is wanting but a distinct and ready apprehension of all the ill consequences of vice, and of all the good effects of virtue. For, as soon as, by this extended power of association, we perceive vice, with all that accompanies and follows it, as *one undivided thing*; and the virtues, with all their train, as one undivided thing likewise, the superiority of the latter, upon the whole, is so great, that no man could hesitate a moment which to prefer. It is only by partial views of things that we are imposed upon, are bewildered, and confounded in our choice. When, in consequence of acting for some time with this clear and steady view of things, virtuous conduct is become habitual, the pains and difficulties of a virtuous course absolutely vanish, and are absorbed in the sense of the infinitely greater good we hereby insure to ourselves. In this case, even the pleasures of vice would be shunned with abhorrence, because we could never separate from them the idea of the infinitely greater pains, with which they are closely connected.

In matters to which we are much accustomed, this comprehension of mind, and coalescence of ideas, is remarkably ready and complete. A person who has been much conversant in business and accounts, and who every day meets with gains or losses, is affected just as the balance of the profits would have affected him, if he had never heard of the particulars. A person who is less conversant in these things would feel his mind as it were, vibrate between both, and would longer perceive their separate effects.

The power of habit, in promoting a perfect coalescence of associated ideas, is most remarkable in cases where the external senses are concerned. The moon, when near the horizon, seems to be considerably larger than it does when it is near the meridian; but this can be owing to nothing but the effect of habit, in consequence of having frequently compared its apparent magnitude with those of the intermediate objects: for its picture upon the retina is well known to be of the same dimensions, and therefore a child, or a person wholly without experience, could not imagine any difference in them. Nay, it is evident from the laws of optics, that originally all objects appear to be in the same plane, and that it is from experience, or habit, that we first get the idea of distance, or of any dimension besides length and breadth.

Again, it is probable, that all objects appear double to

every person, till, by experience, we find the mistake, and then learn to conceive of impressions, made upon two corresponding points of the retina, as referring but to one object. However, so absolutely fixed is our *judgment*, (for such only it evidently is originally) that the moon is larger near the horizon, and that the appearance of two objects is, in reality, no more than that of one, that we are now even puzzled to account for the fact. Perhaps, like observations might be made concerning our other senses.

All these cases are remarkable instances of the power of association, and demonstrate a possibility, not only that an *idea*, but even a *sensation* may cease to appear to be what it originally was ; yea, that it may be so intimately connected with, and absolutely lost in associated ideas only, as to be no longer capable of being resolved back again into its former state.

Another thing worthy of our notice in these facts is, that this amazing effect is accomplished in a limited time, even pretty early in life ; for no person can remember the time when objects appeared to him otherwise than they do now.

Do not these plain, but striking facts, teach us to conceive, how possible it is, that any ideas whatever may be so entirely coalesced by association, that the component parts of the whole image shall absolutely disappear, and never more be seen in the same light in which they were originally viewed ? Thus, all ideas of pain may, at length, perfectly unite with those of the pleasures which they have accompanied, or to which they have been subservient ; and when once the general association, founded on the connexion of good and evil, pleasure and pain, observed through all nature, is firmly established (like the fixing of the corresponding points in the retina) not even the most sudden appearance of evil will be able to affect the mind with the idea of any thing but what is right and desirable upon the whole, any more than two images, one in each eye, though ever so unexpectedly impressed, are not able, even for a moment, or by surprise, to give us the idea of two objects ; though this was always the case in our infancy, and would be so still without association of ideas. If ever our minds should arrive at the perfect state here hinted at, all the works of God, and all the events of Divine Providence, will constantly appear to us as they do to the Divine Being himself, i. e. perfectly and infinitely good, without the least perceivable mixture of evil.

In what time it is even possible to effect all this, cannot, with the least certainty, be so much as conjectured: for though we cannot remember objects appearing to us in any other manner than they now do, yet as these associations of visible ideas must have been impressed every time we opened our eyes, from the time that we began to take any notice of things, we must conclude, that this operation cannot but require a very long and steady application of mind. Temporary pains and evils of all kinds, must be very clearly and satisfactorily seen to be, in all cases, productive of happiness in the issue, under the government of an infinitely good God; and the conviction must be repeated and *felt* again and again, before the ideas will entirely, universally and readily coalesce; so that, by reason of the necessary avocation of mind, and the unsteady and imperfect views of things we can gain in this state, little can be done towards it here, and it must be referred to the attainments of a better world.

The above-mentioned facts, however, shew, in the strongest light, what is the natural progress and effect of association of ideas in the human mind. We see the course that things are evidently in, and it doth not appear, that any bounds can be set to it. We must, therefore, in favourable circumstances (such as we shall, no doubt, find ourselves in, in a future world) approximate to this perfection of comprehension, with the experience of every day; in this way, time only is requisite to make a mere man arrive at a pitch of excellence and happiness, of which we are able, at present, to form but very imperfect conceptions. With these lights, though, as yet, we are able to apply them but very imperfectly, how may we stand amazed in the contemplation of our future selves!

By the help of these considerations, we may form some idea wherein consists the superiority of beings of higher orders, whose intellectual powers exceed ours. The association of their ideas may be more extensive, and associated ideas may unite and coalesce more readily, and perfectly in their minds, than they do in ours; the consequence of which will be, that ideas collected from a greater space, both before and after the present moment, will be co-existent in their minds; which will make the influence of ideas still greater, and that of sensation (or what may be in them analogous to sensation in us) still less than it is with us; so that their natures will be more purely intellectual than ours.

Hence, also, if we may presume to indulge a conjecture on such a subject, may we form a faint idea of the incomprehensible greatness and perfection of the Divine Being. For since there is a real connexion of all things, in the whole system of nature, how distant soever the parts of it may be, in point of time or place, this connexion may at once be so completely seen by him who planned, and who directs the whole, that it may be said, there is nothing past or future in his ideas, but, that to him, the whole compass of duration is, to every real purpose, without distinction, present. To him, therefore, *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*; the two extremes, being so perfectly united, and so equally present, that the intervals, how different soever, vanish alike in both cases.

We see, then, the course which the Divine Being has pointed out for the improvement of intelligent beings, whereby we may make approaches to the excellence and happiness of the Divine nature. We are to be influenced less by sensation, and more by associated ideas perpetually. The association of all connected ideas is to grow more perfect, and more extensive continually, till things past, present and to come, shall, to greater and greater distances, become the subject of our contemplation, and the source of our happiness. Provision is made for the continuance of this progress, in the structure of our minds, and in all the influences to which we are exposed. All the objects about which we are conversant, and all the events to which we are liable, are contrived to favour it.

Let us now consider whether any thing similar to this may be observed in the scheme of revelation; and since both the ordinary and extraordinary course of Divine Providence have the same object with respect to us, both being designed and calculated to raise, improve and bless the human race; let us consider whether they be conducted in a manner analogous to one another, so that we may trace the same hand in both, and hence derive a presumptive argument in favour of revelation.

To me, I own, there seems to be, in this respect, a very great analogy between both these dispensations of God to mankind, and the argument that may thence be deduced in favour of revelation strikes me very much. For in those extraordinary dispensations of God to mankind, of which we are informed in the books of Scripture, we see a most glorious apparatus for accomplishing this great end, for

enlarging the comprehension of the human mind, and raising us to the highest pitch of perfection and excellence.

To have the mind impressed with the idea of its being in a state of moral government, and that our actions have great and distant consequences, is of admirable use in this respect ; and this, we find, was the situation of Adam presently after he came from the hands of his Maker. He was permitted the free use of all the trees in the garden of Eden except one, which he was forbidden to meddle with under severe penalties. In these circumstances he was under a necessity of looking before him, and attending to the distant consequences of what he was doing. He saw (as is generally understood) an immortal existence before him in case of obedience, and of prudence and regularity in the gratification of his appetites, and death, (of the meaning of which he was, no doubt, informed) in case of disobedience and irregular indulgence.

If we consider the importance of having enlarged views, and of the attention being engaged upon objects, beyond the present moment, we must see how vastly superior this situation was, with respect to the improvement of his faculties, to a state in which he should have been left to the random indulgence of his appetites, without any intimation of the consequences except what he could learn by slow experience. The more we think upon this subject, the greater will this advantage appear to be. Mankind might, for ages, have been little more than brutes, without some provision and assistance of this kind.

If the object of this trial, viz. the abstaining from the fruit of a tree, appear trifling, we should consider the infantile state of the first man, and the only dangerous excesses that, in his situation, he could be guilty of ; and we may see the greatest propriety in this very circumstance. Would it not have been much more absurd to have forbidden him to steal, to commit adultery, or indeed, to have enjoined him the observance of any of the ten commandments of the moral law ? What is more natural, or common with ourselves, than to forbid children to eat of certain kinds of food, or to meddle with things that are most in their way, by which they are liable to do harm to themselves or others ? They are not capable of offending in any other respects, or of understanding any higher precepts. We are not made acquainted with all the restrictions under which our first parents were laid ; but it cannot be doubted, but that they must have been of a salutary nature, whether

they themselves might be aware of it or not. We do not always give our children the reason of the restrictions we lay them under, because they are not always capable of understanding them. The prohibition to eat of a particular fruit is the only one that is mentioned by Moses, because that was the case in which Adam transgressed; but, for any thing we know, he might have been as expressly forbidden to jump from a precipice, or to plunge into a pit of water; and the forbidden fruit might have been as naturally hurtful to him as either of them.

It is by no means improbable, but that something of *fable* may have mixed with so ancient a history as that of the *fall*; and the present condition of man was, no doubt, both *foreseen* and *intended* by our all-wise Creator, as the best for us upon the whole; but I think we cannot reasonably object to the leading circumstances in Moses's account of the manner into which we came into it. And as it represents man as entering upon existence under a sense of *moral government*, it is far more agreeable to the ideas we conceive of the wisdom and goodness of God, more favourable to the human race, and more consonant to the natural provision he has made for enlarging the comprehension of the human mind, and thereby perfecting our natures, and advancing our happiness; and therefore far superior to the condition in which Lucretius, and the rest of the Epicureans, represent the introduction of man into the world, i. e. with no greater advantage for looking before him, enlarging his views, and increasing his happiness, than the lowest of the animal creation.

In the sentence passed upon man after the fall, we see an opportunity is taken of carrying the views of the human mind to objects still more remote; and encouraging, though obscure views are opened to him, in the promise, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*.

In the patriarchal ages, the intercourse between the Divine Being and the human race is continued, but without his assuming a higher character than men in those times were capable of having intercourse with. Consequently, their apprehensions of moral government would be growing more clear and determinate, and their ideas of duty and obligation (together with their expectation of consequences corresponding to their actions) more definite and certain, so as to induce them to be less influenced by prospects of immediate pleasure or gain than before.

The fate of men's children and posterity is always an

interesting object to them, and must have been peculiarly so in the early ages of the world, when the whole earth was before them, and every man had the chance of being the founder of great and mighty nations. These, therefore, were the views with which the Divine Being thought proper, at that time, to engage the attention of the patriarchs, and enforce the obligation of virtue. Abraham had the promise of becoming the *father of many nations*, and that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*. With these prospects, we find his mind so much enlarged, and his faith in futurity so strong, that he leaves his native land, content and happy in being a sojourner in the country which his posterity were to possess.

In the whole course of the Jewish history, repeated miracles and prophecies would constantly tend to keep up the views of that people to great and remote objects. And this, together with the *distinct ideas* they had of the origin of the world, and the early history of it, their knowledge of the rise of their own nation, and of the frequent interpositions of the Divine Being in their favour, would give a dignity to their conceptions, and a grandeur to their prospects, to which the Heathen nations must have been strangers. There was a majesty and dignity in the Jewish ritual, in their temple, and the service of it, which far exceeded any thing in the Heathen world; and, being accompanied with just and sublime ideas of the one true God, it must have given a sublimity to their sentiments, and a warmth and fervour to their religious impressions, to which other nations could not have attained. Accordingly, in all the compositions of the Heathen poets, in honour of their gods, there are no traces of any thing like that spirit of manly devotion which animates the Psalms of David.

In the frequent relapses of the Jews into idolatry, the prophets are continually sent of God, to remind them of the allegiance they owed to their Maker, to hold out to them the expectation of his favour or resentment, and thereby preserve upon their minds the influence of great and remote objects.

When they were effectually cured of their proneness to idolatry, by the Babylonish captivity,\* and, therefore, such frequent interpositions of the Divine Being were less necessary, their minds were prepared for that long interruption of miracles which ensued, by the remarkably distinct pro-

\* See this opinion disputed by Mr. Dodson, in his "Notes on Isaiah." *New Translation*, pp. 156—161.

phesies of Isaiah, Daniel and Malachi, concerning future and glorious times under the Messiah. The very year of his appearance was fixed by Daniel, and though it was not done in such a manner as to enable them to make it out with perfect exactness, yet it was sufficient to keep up their attention to it; and, in fact, they were not so far out in their calculations, but that, at the time of our Saviour, and not long before, we find a general and most ardent expectation raised in the whole body of the Jewish nation of some approaching deliverer.

In this interval, therefore, between the captivity and the birth of Christ, far greater views and prospects were present to the mind of a Jew, than people of other nations could have any idea of. So great was the actual influence of these ideas, that, in the time of the Maccabees, they shewed a heroism and magnanimity in the defence of their religion, and in suffering for it, which must have astonished their Heathen persecutors. And our Saviour found among them such notions of a future state, and of a resurrection, as (however they came by them, and how imperfect and obscure soever they were) could not fail to make numbers of them to think and act in a manner far superior to the most admired of the Greek and Roman philosophers.

If the attention of the Jews was kept awake to great and distant objects, how much more is this the case with Christians, to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel? Christianity is the last dispensation of God to mankind, and it doth not seem possible, that more ample provision should be made to enlarge the views and comprehension of the human mind, in order to fix its attention upon great and remote objects, and raise it above the influence of present and temporary things.

A true Christian, like his great Master, is *not of this world*, but a citizen of heaven. He considers himself as a *stranger and pilgrim here below, and lives by faith, and not by sight*. Let him be ever so poor and despised here, he looks upon himself as an heir of immortal glory and felicity, of an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him*. He may see his body decaying with old age, wasting with a disorder, or mangled with torture, and every way at the mercy of his enraged persecutors; but he rejoices in the firm belief and expectation of its rising again *incorruptible* at the last day, and that when *Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory*.

What an elevation of thought and sentiment is here! How must this faith make us *overcome the world*, and render us superior to its allurements or its threats! With this enlarged comprehension of mind, which brings the future consequences of his actions into immediate prospect, it is impossible that a sincere Christian should live addicted to vicious gratifications and pursuits, which he must see to be destructive of these his animating hopes; and he must necessarily grow more in love with that temper and conduct which is, with the greatest propriety, called *Christian*, and which ensures to him these glorious expectations. *As he who has called him to these great privileges is holy, so will he also be holy in all manner of conversation.* It will be his daily endeavour to *cultivate that holiness of heart and life, without which, he is sensible, no man can see the Lord.* With this hope set before him, all the afflictions of this present life will seem light, trifling and not worthy to be named with, but will be absolutely lost in the consideration of, that *eternal weight of glory* which awaits his patient continuance in well-doing.

This superiority to present and temporary things, which is attained by truly Christian principles, is of the most rational nature, being of the same kind with that which is acquired by experience, and which necessarily results from the structure of our minds, and the circumstances in which Divine Providence has placed us in this world: for it is only perfecting the association of those ideas which have a real connexion, and uniting in our minds the several parts of one whole, and things which nothing but time separates. If it be compared with that kind of superiority which might be acquired by other principles, those of the *Stoics*, for instance, its advantage will appear to be exceedingly great.

The Stoic affects to despise pain, because, according to his arbitrary definition of things, it cannot be called an *evil*, and does not depend upon himself. Having imagined, though without any ground, that every man's happiness must, in any case, arise from himself (in exclusion even of the Divine Being), he thinks it absurd to complain of any thing which he could not help. Complaint implies a sense of unhappiness; and this, according to his hypothesis, can never take place without his own consent. If his wife or child be in the most dreadful agonies, he looks, or affects to look, on their condition with the greatest tranquillity and the most unfeeling indifference, satisfied that sickness and pain are not in his catalogue of *things within his power*, and

that the sufferers themselves are not unhappy, since misfortunes are unavoidable, and he knew that his wife or child were not naturally exempt from them. When he dies, he expects that his soul, being a particle detached from the Universal Mind, will be absorbed in it again, and that his separate consciousness will be lost for ever.

These are the great outlines of the famous philosophical system of Zeno, which is said to have made so many great men; but it has certainly no foundation in nature. The principles of it can never have been really felt, and all the boasted effects of it must have arisen from conceit and obstinacy.

How differently, and how much more naturally, does the Christian think and act in the cases above-mentioned! He does not pretend to deny the evidence of his senses, nor has recourse to whimsical distinctions; and, not having maintained that *pain is no evil*, he finds himself under no necessity of behaving as if he was unaffected by it. He owns that present sufferings are *not joyous, but grievous*; but he still thinks them nothing in comparison with *the glory that shall be revealed*, and therefore he *endures patiently* for righteousness' sake, in a firm belief of being more than recompensed for them *at the resurrection of the just*. If his friends be in distress, he has no principles that lead him to check, but, on the other hand, such as encourage him freely to indulge his natural sympathy with them; and these feelings will certainly prompt him to exert himself to the utmost in their favour. At the same time, he will not fail to exhort his friends to the duties of Christian patience and fortitude, inculcating the great Christian doctrine of the transitoriness of this world, and its subserviency to another. When he dies, he indulges no extravagant, but really uncomfortable conceit, about being absorbed in the Divine mind, but believes that he shall, in his own person, rise again from the dead, when he shall resume and retain his own separate consciousness, live again under the government of that God whose goodness he has experienced, and whose friendship he has secured, know all his virtuous friends once more, and rejoice with them through all eternity.

If we consider the *principles of morals* in the Heathen world, we shall see the manifest advantage there is over it in the plan of revelation. The views of the Heathens upon this subject were exceedingly confined, and did not require that comprehension of mind which is necessary to the practice of those duties that were enjoined both in the Jewish

and Christian systems. The great duties of piety, consisting in the fear and love of God, and a cheerful reliance on his providence, were, in a manner, unknown in ancient times beyond the boundaries of Judea. And what can more evidently tend to enlarge the comprehension and faculties of the human mind, than the regards which are due to the Maker and Governor of the world?

While the attention of the Heathens was wholly engrossed by sensible things, those who were favoured with Divine revelation, even in its most imperfect state, were engaged in the contemplation of their invisible Author. They considered the enjoyments of life as the effects of his bounty, and all the events of it as taking place according to the wise appointment of his providence. Thus was the power of association enabled to present to their minds the ideas of great and remote objects, by which their sentiments were influenced, and their conduct directed. By this means, limited as were the views of the ancient patriarchs, their conceptions were far more enlarged, and consequently their minds more intellectual, than those of the Gentile world.

It is true that all the Heathens were prone to superstition, and that a great number of their actions were influenced by regards to invisible agents; but (not to say, what is very probable, that their religion was, in this respect, a corruption of the patriarchal\*) all the gods they had any idea of, at least all with whom they maintained any intercourse, were *local* and *territorial* divinities, liable to the influence of low and vulgar passions, and limited in their powers and operations. It was not possible, therefore, that their theology should suggest such sublime ideas, as must have been conceived by the Jews, from the perusal of the books of Moses; in which we find the idea of one God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, who established, and who controuls the laws of nature, and who superintends the affairs of the whole world, giving the kingdoms of it to whomsoever he pleases; a Being of unspotted purity, and a friend and protector of all good men. So far were the notions which the Gentiles entertained of their gods below the conceptions of the Jews, concerning their Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth, *who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*, destroying their enemies in the Red Sea, and feeding them with bread from heaven for the space of forty years; that they could hardly have had any ideas to

\* See Dr. Waterland's Charge, p. 39. &c. in Young, Idol. Cor. I. p. 281.

some of the finest expressions which occur in the sacred books of the Jews, as, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, and many others, which express sentiments of the most pure and exalted devotion.

If any people have exalted and sublime ideas, they are sure to be found in their poetry; but how poor and low is the sacred poetry of the Heathens in comparison with the Psalms of David! The poems of Homer, of Hesiod, or of Callimachus, in honour of the Grecian gods, can hardly be read without laughter; but the book of Psalms (the greatest part of which were written long before the works of any of those Grecian poets, and by persons who had travelled and seen far less than they had done) cannot be read without the greatest seriousness, and are still capable of exciting sentiments of the warmest and most exalted, and yet the most perfectly rational devotion. They give us the most sublime ideas of the infinite power, wisdom and goodness of God. This difference between the poetry of the Jews and the Greeks, in favour of the former, is so great, that I think it cannot be accounted for without the supposition of Divine communications. In point of genius, the Greeks seem to have been evidently superior, and they were certainly possessed of the art of composition in much greater perfection.

Whence, then, could arise so manifest an inferiority in this respect? It must have been because the Jewish theology gave that nation ideas of a Being infinitely superior to themselves, the contemplation of which, with that of his works, and of his providence, would tend to improve and exalt their faculties; whereas, the Heathen theology gave them no ideas of beings much superior to the race of man. In general, the gods of the Greeks and Romans were supposed to have been mere men, beings of the same rank and condition with themselves; and, though their powers were supposed to be enlarged upon their deification, their passions and morals were not at all improved, but continued just the same as before, so that their greater powers were employed about the gratification of the lowest appetites. This theology, therefore, could not infuse that noble enthusiasm which was inspired by the Jewish religion, but must rather have tended to debase their faculties.

That extensive and perfect *benevolence*, which is so strongly inculcated in the New Testament, implies more enlarged sentiments, and greater perfection of the intellectual faculties, than that more limited *benevolence*, which is treated of

by the heathen moralists, which was hardly ever thought to extend farther than to a love of one's own countrymen, and which admitted slaves to none of the privileges of men, but considered them as no other than the property of their masters.\* But, in the eye of a Christian, *Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free*, are all equal. The boasted attachments of private friendship are not more endearing than that mutual love which Christ recommends to his disciples. But, whereas private friendship was, with the Greeks and Romans, the perfection, and almost the end of all virtue, *the brotherly love* of Christians is only considered as a branch of a more extensive benevolence, and leads to the love of all the human race.†

It is evident that the duties of contentment, trust in Divine Providence, meekness, patience, forbearance and forgiveness of injuries, are more insisted on by Christ and his apostles, than by any of the Heathen philosophers;‡ and these virtues certainly require a greater comprehension of mind than any other social duties. Children are quick in their resentments, their anger is presently excited, and they are unable to conceal what little malice or revenge they are capable of; but in proportion as men advance in age, in experience, and, consequently in intellect, they are able to overlook affronts, and to suspend, or wholly to stifle their resentments; because they are able to take in more distant consequences of passions and actions; and the sentiments which are suggested by these extensive views, moderate and overpower those which are prompted by their present sensations.

\* The governments of Greece and Rome, whose boasted freedom has been the favourite theme of popular eloquence through every age, were really nothing better than most oppressive aristocracies. On the authority of approved ancient authors it has been computed that "there were in Athens 21,000 citizens, 10,000 strangers, and 400,000 slaves;" the latter being classed, as to rights, with their masters' *quadrupeds*. "The slaves belonging to particular Roman citizens amounted to 30,000." One of these, "Vedius Pollio, was accustomed when his slaves had committed a fault (sometimes a very trifling one) to order them to be thrown into his fish-ponds to feed his lampreys." Truly has it been observed, "that under most of the governments of Europe (severe as some of them are) the bulk of the people do in reality enjoy more true liberty than was ever possessed by the lower classes under the freest states of antiquity." See Millar on *Ranks in Society*, Dublin, 1771, pp. 207 and 232, and Bishop Porteus, *Beneficial Effects of Christianity*, pp. 16, 17, and 85. See also Berkeley's *Alciphron*, Dial. V. S. xii. and a variety of affecting proofs how "the practice of domestic slavery" influenced the "barbarous manners of ancient times," collected in Hume's "Political Discourses," 1753, *On the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, D. X.

† See Remarks on *Patriotism and Friendship*. Jenyns, *Internal Ev.* Prop. III.

‡ "La Philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la Religion ne le fasse encore mieux: et la Religion en fait beaucoup que la philosophie ne sauroit faire." Such is the impartial testimony of Rousseau. *Emile*, T. III. L. 4.

Christianity, therefore, by extending these duties, supposes, and thereby favours and promotes a still greater advance in intellectual perfection. To act like a Christian, a man must be possessed of true greatness of mind, a self-command, fortitude, or magnanimity, which is infinitely more superior to the disguised revenge of which some are capable, and which they can brood over for years, than this is superior to the quick resentments of children. It requires a more just knowledge of things, more experience, and more foresight.

Thus does the Christian scheme appear to be perfectly consonant to nature. It supposes a series of dispensations, in which the human mind is operated upon, and its improvement promoted in a manner analogous to that in which it is actually operated upon, and its improvement promoted every day. As the one, therefore, is conducted according to the ordinary providence of the Divine Being, the other is what might be expected from his extraordinary dispensations. Both these schemes have the same great object in view, and in both of them the same end is gained by the same methods. For, in fact, the only instrument employed is that great and extensive principle of *association of ideas*, which is so conspicuous in the human mind, and which, according to the admirable theory of Dr. Hartley, furnishes the *stamina* for all its other properties, and is the source of all our faculties.

It is by this principle of *association*, that our views are enlarged to take in distant objects, but objects that have a real connexion with those that are present. And it is an habitual attention to these associated circumstances of our actions, that gives them an influence as if they were present. As virtue, with all its consequences in this life, is eligible upon the whole, we are led, by this principle of association, to choose and practise it, without any other guide than nature and common providence; but as virtue, with all those more extensive consequences, which revelation informs us of, is infinitely more eligible, we are led, by the same principle of association, to love it with more ardour, and to practise it with more constancy, because, by the help of those lights, which are furnished by the extraordinary providence of Almighty God, in the revelation of his will to mankind, we see it to be a thing in which we are more deeply interested than we could otherwise have known ourselves to be.

INSTITUTES  
OF  
NATURAL AND REVEALED  
RELIGION.

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PART III.

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CONTAINING

A VIEW OF THE DOCTRINES OF REVELATION.

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THE  
INTRODUCTION.

THE execution of this part of my undertaking has been attended (as all who are acquainted with the subject will be fully sensible) with peculiar difficulties, owing chiefly to the very different views, which even rational and learned men have entertained concerning the *Doctrines of Revelation*; and, therefore, it is with peculiar diffidence that I offer this part to the public.

A strict attention, however, to my original design, which was *the instruction of young persons*, has enabled me to keep clear of a great deal of that embarrassment, in which I should otherwise have been involved; for, though it was not possible to avoid all subjects that have been controverted, I have, by this means, avoided many of them; and there are few of those which I could not avoid that I have discussed at large, having contented myself, for the most part, with relating what appeared to me to be the genuine *Doctrines of Revelation*, without intimating that there has ever been any controversy upon the subject.

It was also with a view to the instruction of youth, that

I have been so particular in my account of what we learn from the Scriptures concerning *God*, and all the branches of human *duty*; and, especially, that I have quoted so much from the Scriptures themselves on those subjects. My intention was to appear as little as possible in this matter myself, and to let the sacred writers, to whose more intimate acquaintance I wish to introduce my pupil, speak for themselves. There is, besides, an authority and energy in the language of the Scriptures, which is peculiar to themselves, and which cannot fail, when they are read and considered with due attention, to make the most favourable and the strongest impressions.

I have, upon more occasions than one, complained that the Scriptures are too much neglected even by Christians, though we cannot be too well acquainted with them, and there are no books that we can read with so much advantage. I shall be happy if I can make this work also subservient to my design of recommending them, and more especially to young persons. This part, which contains an account of what we learn from the Scriptures, was far from being intended to supersede the use of them. It was rather intended to afford some assistance for the better understanding of them, and thereby to introduce my reader to the diligent study of them, and frequent meditation upon them, with more advantage.

I had intended to have prefixed to this part a particular examination of what has been advanced concerning the doctrines and evidences of religion, by Dr. Beattie, and especially Dr. Oswald, who represent *common sense* as superseding almost all *reasoning* about religion, natural or revealed, and who have advanced maxims which I cannot help thinking to be both ill-founded and dangerous. But finding, after I had made some progress in this work, that it drew to a considerable length, I thought it would be better to reserve the remarks that I had made on those writers to some other opportunity, when I might enter into a more particular examination of what Dr. Reid has advanced concerning this pretended new principle of *common sense*; and, in the mean time, to content myself with a few general remarks on the subject, and an extract or two from Dr. Oswald, that my reader may form some idea of the nature and spirit of the principles that I meant to oppose.\*

I am truly sorry to complain of the conduct of any of the

\* Since this was written I have published, in a separate volume, *An Examination of the Writings of Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oswald*. P. "An Examination of

sincere friends of revelation, as I believe Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oswald to be ; but it appears to me, that their writings must necessarily give a great and a very plausible advantage to unbelievers, who, finding that it is not now pretended that religion in general, or Christianity in particular, is founded on *argument*, will make no difficulty of rejecting them on the principles of *common sense* also, and will not be displeased to find that Christian writers will argue the matter with them no longer.

This common sense, which is from henceforth to be considered as the first, and likewise the last resort with respect to religion, and the evidences of it, these writers represent as being the same power or faculty by which we judge that the whole is greater than a part, and by which we distinguish all other self-evident truths from palpable absurdities. By the very concise process of an appeal to this principle, they say, that any man may fully satisfy himself concerning the truth of the being, the unity, the attributes and the providence of God, and also of a future state of retribution, and even (as Dr. Oswald has given out, and has promised to prove at large,) of the evidences of Christianity.

Upon this plan I might have saved myself the trouble of writing the preceding parts of this work, in which my object has been to prove the truth of the above-mentioned propositions, contenting myself with roundly asserting them, and, without replying to any of the objections of unbelievers, not hesitating to pronounce every man a fool (see Dr. Oswald's Appeal, p. 134,) who did not assent to them.

But notwithstanding I have given all the attention I could to the treatise of Dr. Oswald, who has written most fully on the subject, I am by no means convinced that the propositions above-mentioned are to be classed among *primary truths*, or those to which every man must necessarily give his assent, (when the terms of them have been properly explained,) without the help of other intermediate propositions. And as I have no natural right to set up my private judgment as the standard of truth, in opposition to that of the rest of mankind, I do not see but that an unbeliever is as much at liberty to assert the *falsehood* as I am to assert the *truth* of such propositions ; and what would be gained by our reciprocally calling one another fools and blockheads ?

The source of this umbrage that has been taken at *reasoning* about religion, appears to me to have been a mistake concerning the nature of it, and an expectation of a *kind*, or *degree* of evidence, that the nature of the case will not admit of; and which, indeed, is by no means necessary for the purpose to which it is applied, being different from, or superior to, that evidence which in other similar cases does actually produce conviction, and influence the conduct, which, however, is evidently all that can be necessary in the business of religion.

If a lottery be proposed to me, in which I see that there are a thousand prizes to one blank, I do not demur about purchasing a ticket, because it cannot be *absolutely demonstrated* that I shall be a gainer by it—a very high degree of probability having an effect upon the mind, that can hardly be distinguished from that of absolute certainty.

If the Copernican hypothesis of the solar system be proposed to me, I do not reject it, or even keep my mind in suspense, because there is a *possibility* of the Ptolemaic system being true, and because the sun, immense as it is, and rapid as its motion must be, *may* revolve round the earth.

This is still more evidently the case with respect to the influence of *testimony* upon the mind of man, though it can never amount to more than a very high degree of probability. For we reason and act upon the supposition of there having been such a man as Julius Cæsar, of his having been stabbed in the senate-house, and of there being such a city as Pekin, in China, just as if we ourselves had been present at those scenes, or places; though there is a *possibility* of all the books we have read having been contrived to impose upon us and the world, and that all our acquaintance were in the secret, and concurred to favour the deception.

Now all the evidence of religious truths is of these kinds, being either general conclusions, by induction from a number of particular appearances, or founded on historical evidence.

If any person, like Lord Bolingbroke, call in question the goodness of God, all that I can say to convince him of his mistake is, to shew him that there are more marks of kind intention than of the contrary in the structure and government of the world; and if he reply that some facts, singly taken, are as evident marks of a malevolent intention, as others are of a good intention, and the particular instances to which he alludes be such as I cannot deny or explain, so that my proof is not complete, I frankly acknowledge that I

have no other or better. But this is sufficient to satisfy me, and, I presume, it will be abundantly satisfactory to all who are candid and impartial; and with persons who are otherwise disposed, an appeal to their common sense will have no more effect.

In like manner, to prove the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ, the early dates, and consequent authenticity of the gospel histories, or any other facts, from which the truth of what we call the *gospel* is inferred, it is sufficient, but it is necessary, to shew that the credibility of these facts has the same foundation as that of those which constitute the body of all ancient history, and that the miraculous events have such additional evidence of an external and internal kind, as overbalances our backwardness to admit the truth of facts dissimilar to those in other histories, and those which have fallen within our own particular observation. And if any person will say that this is not *demonstration*, I am silent, satisfied with having alleged such evidence as the nature of the case admitted, and despairing of producing conviction by any other means.

The thing that seems chiefly to have influenced the writers above-mentioned to desert the plain doctrine of Mr. Locke, concerning the source of our ideas, is its insufficiency to demonstrate the reality of a *material world*; and, I readily acknowledge, it is insufficient for such a demonstration as shall leave no room for cavil, because it may be said that, it is *possible* that the Divine Being may, by his own immediate agency, present every separate train of ideas to every individual mind, without the medium of an external world. And if this appears to any person a more natural and simple hypothesis, to account for our ideas, and therefore preferable to the supposition of a real external world, by means of which, and of a more general agency of the Deity, the same ideas may be presented to thousands and millions of minds, I leave him to his imagination, from which no evil, that I know, will result.

Half the inhabitants of the globe, for instance, may be looking towards the heavens at the same time, and all their minds are impressed in the same manner: all see the moon, stars and planets, in precisely the same situations; and even the observations of those who use telescopes correspond with the utmost exactness. To explain this, Bishop Berkeley says, that the Divine Being, attending particularly to each individual mind, impresses their sensoriums in the same, or a corresponding manner, without the medium of

any thing external to them.\* On the other hand, I, without pretending that his scheme is impossible, where Divine power is concerned, think, however, that it is more natural to suppose, that there really are such bodies as the moon, stars and planets, placed at certain distances from us, and moving in certain directions, by means of which, without such an agency of the Deity as he supposes, all our minds are necessarily impressed in this corresponding manner.

I am satisfied that if such a representation as this, (by which I exhibit to any person particular appearances as arising from more *general laws*, which is agreeable to the analogy of every thing else that we observe,) does not please and convince him, it will signify nothing to tell him, with Messrs. Reid, Beattie and Oswald, that the case is not to be argued at all, that he has something within himself, called *common sense*, which tells him that there is an external world, and that, if he reflect a moment, he must *know* that all his objections are frivolous and absurd.

The hypothesis of there being no external world, is by no means so shocking to my understanding, or, to use the favourite phrase, my common sense, as the supposition that I am properly *conscious* of more than passes within my own mind, or, as Dr. Reid expresses it, that we *really perceive things that are external to us*, and do not judge of all things that are without ourselves by notices perceived within, how mistaken soever we may be in our judgments concerning them.

It is not very easy to understand what it is, philosophically speaking, that Dr. Reid, Dr. Beattie and Dr. Oswald, always mean by their common sense; but how captivating soever their general descriptions of it may be at the first hearing, they appear to me to be exceedingly vague and inconsistent, upon a more attentive examination.

Sometimes one would imagine that the human mind was so effectually guarded with this internal defence, that no one of the human race could be in danger of falling into any error of consequence, and that even all revelation might have been spared. "The human mind," says Dr. Oswald, Vol. I. p. 8, "has a power of pronouncing, at first sight, on obvious

\* He professes thus to have furnished "a new argument, of a singular nature, in proof of the immediate care and providence of a God, present to our minds, and directing our actions." *The Theory of Vision vindicated and explained*, 1793, p. 12. There was published, in defence of the same Theory, "*Clavis Universalis, or a New Inquiry after Truth. Being a Demonstration of the Non-Existence or Impossibility of an External World.*" By Arth. Collier, Rector of Langford Magna, near Sarum." 8vo. 1713.

truth, with a quickness, clearness and indubitable certainty, similar, if not equal to the information conveyed by the external organs of sense. Its exercise begins in children with the first dawn of rationality, and not till then; and is ever after enjoyed, in some degree, by learned and unlearned, and by every individual of the human kind, who is not an idiot, or somehow disordered in his intellects, affording an almost infallible direction in the whole conduct of their lives, and was intended by the Author of our being for giving us entire satisfaction concerning all primary truths, those of religion in particular; and our not having recourse to that power, is the true cause of those idle disputes which have been maintained of late about the truth of religion." "The feeling of moral excellence," he says, p. 120, "may be lost, but, the case of madness excepted, a man cannot lose a perception of the difference between obvious truth and palpable absurdity."

At other times we are informed, that it is a most difficult thing to attain to a right judgment on the principles of this same common sense. "Good sense," Dr. Oswald says, Vol. I. p. 16, "is a species of knowledge, of difficult attainment. It is, indeed, the gift of heaven, but needs to be stirred up, and has been so long and universally neglected, that to give it full exercise requires more attention and application of thought, than most people are willing to bestow. Every smatterer in science takes it for granted that he is possessed of the principles of good sense, but on trial the greatest adepts will hardly admit them. They are, in truth, so plain, that to illustrate and inculcate them is to tire the patience and to affront the judgment of the reader; but, at the same time, so diametrically opposite to received opinions and established maxims, that barely to propose, or even to state them with perspicuity, without unfolding or inculcating them with due care, would be to encourage that superficial way of judging, which is the source of all our errors."

He farther says, p. 18, that in order "to convey that full and permanent conviction which is due to truths of the first rank, the mind must be allowed to judge of them with impartiality and coolness, proceeding not upon sentiments suddenly raised by striking views of truth, but on a deliberate judgment, formed by a familiar acquaintance with the object: and in order thereto, the same truths must be presented again and again, with no great variation, and with as little adventitious ornament as possible."

In this deplorable state of the affairs of *common sense*, one

would think that Dr. Oswald might be glad to avail himself of the aid of *reason*; but of this he entertains the greatest dread. Even a professed unbeliever is not so great a bug-bear to him as a reasoning Christian. I shall present my reader with one of his numerous pathetic complaints on this subject.

“Not only the Christian revelation, but the moral perfections and moral government of God, yea, and the very being of virtue, have been made a subject of dispute. Free-thinkers are not ashamed to publish their doubts concerning these realities; divines and philosophers have not disdained to establish them by a multitude of arguments. What is yet more to be regretted, the preachers of the gospel, forgetting the dignity of their character, and the design of their office, have condescended to plead the cause of religion in much the same manner as lawyers maintain a disputed right of property. Instead of awakening the natural sentiments of the human heart, and giving them a free direction, they have entered into reasonings about piety, justice and benevolence, too profound to be fathomed by the multitude, and too subtle to produce any considerable effect. Instead of setting forth the displays of Divine perfection in the dispensation of the gospel, so admirably well fitted to touch, to penetrate and to subdue the human mind, they have entertained their audiences with long and laboured proofs of a revelation from God, of which few have any serious doubt, and which no man can disbelieve in any consistency with common sense. May not this be called with great propriety a throwing cold water on religion? And ought it not to be considered as one of the chief causes of that insensibility to all its concerns, of which we so frequently complain? The multitude have been astonished, wise men have been ashamed, and good men grieved at this treatment of religion, so much beneath its dignity.”

I would not be severe upon Dr. Oswald, though he observes no bounds in his censures of the most respectable writers of the last and present age, without distinction; but I cannot help saying, that, in this loose and rhetorical manner, and with such airs of self-sufficiency and arrogance, is the greatest part of his two volumes written, consisting of mere declamation, the grossest misrepresentations of the nature of reasoning, and exaggerations of the abuses of it, imputing to Christian divines a conduct that they are not chargeable with, and where argument fails, having recourse to dogmatical assertions and abuse, at the same time that his

tautology is inexpressibly tiresome. I really do not remember that I ever read a work so large as this of Dr. Oswald, that contained so little ; I do not mean of *truth*, but of *any thing*. That any good should come of this manner of writing is to me incomprehensible. It may, indeed, give pleasure to some to see insolence answered by insolence, and sophistry by sophistry ; but, alas ! truth is no gainer by such a mode of defence as this.

It was not till after the publication of the two preceding parts of this work that I had an opportunity of reading Dr. Oswald's treatise ; for though I had promised the author of the *Remarks on my publications*, to procure it immediately, upon his recommendation, a variety of pursuits prevented my giving any attention to it. I am sorry that my opinion of this performance should differ so much from that of this ingenious writer, and indeed from that of many other persons whom I much respect.

As to Dr. Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, I frankly declare, that, excepting a few incidental things, foreign to his general object, I do not find in it a single observation that is *new*, and at the same time *just*. The only effect of all the pains that both this ingenious writer, Dr. Beattie, and Dr. Oswald have taken with the subject, appears to me to have terminated in nothing, besides beclouding and puzzling a business which, in the main, Mr. Locke left very clear and far advanced.

But I am most astonished that any person should write upon the subject of the *human mind*, without taking notice of so capital a performance as that of Dr. Hartley ; who, beginning where Mr. Locke left it, has raised a system that is equally amazing for its simplicity and extent. For my own part, I do not hesitate to rank *Hartley's Observations on Man* among the greatest efforts of human genius ; and, considering the great importance of the object of it, I am clearly of opinion that it is, without exception, the most valuable production of the mind of man.\*

Time is necessary to the general understanding of every work of great depth and merit, as was most remarkably the case with *Newton's Principia*. I have no doubt, however, but that the time will certainly come, when the general principles of Hartley, as well as of Locke, will be fully established, and when every contrary hypothesis will be forgotten.

\* See Dr. Young's high opinion of this work, quoted from Richard's Correspondence, Mon. Repos. I. p. 569.

If they be remembered at all, it will be with astonishment, that, appearing after such a work as Hartley's, (which was published so long ago as 1749,) the least attention should have been given to them.

I cannot conclude this Introduction without recommending to my readers the present Bishop of Carlisle's *Appendix to his Considerations on the Theory of Religion*,\* for a fuller account of the Scripture doctrine of the *state of the dead*, than is given in Chapter I. Section V. of this Volume.

\* "Concerning the Use of the Words *Soul*, or *Spirit*, in Holy Scripture; and the State of the *Dead* there described." P. 371. The Bishop first examines all the passages in the Old or New Testament in which the word *Soul* or *Spirit* occurs, and thence concludes, that "neither these words nor any other ever stand for a purely immaterial principle in man, or a substance (whatever some may imagine they mean by that word) wholly separable from, and independent of the body." He next proceeds "to consider what account the Scriptures give of that state to which death reduces us." This he proves, by numerous quotations from both Testaments, to be "represented by sleep; by a negation of all *life, thought or action*; by rest, a resting-place, or home; silence, oblivion, darkness, destruction or corruption." He adds, that, "agreeably to these representations of our state in death, *revelation* informs us, that we shall not awake or be made alive till the *resurrection*," and "that the Scripture, in speaking of the connexion between our present and future being, doth not take into the account our *intermediate state in death*, no more than we, in describing the course of any man's actions, take in the time he sleeps;" but consistently affirms "an immediate connexion between *death and judgment*." The Bishop next replies to objections, by the advocates for a separate state of consciousness, and subjoins "the sentiments" of his friend Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, "a very pious, worthy person, eminently well versed in the Scripture-language." Dr. T. thus closes his letter to the Bishop, after the perusal of his papers: "We can never prove, that the soul of man is of such a nature, that it can and must exist, and live, think, act, enjoy, &c. separate from, and independent of, the body. All our present experience shews the contrary. The operations of the mind depend, constantly and invariably, upon the state of the body; of the brain in particular. If some dying persons have a lively use of their rational faculties to the very last, it is because death has invaded some other part, and the brain remains sound and vigorous. But what is the sense of revelation? You have given a noble collection of texts, which shew it very clearly. The subject yields many practical remarks, and the warmest and strongest excitations to piety." Pp. 440, 441.

Mr. Layton (quoted p. 60), in one of his last treatises, in 1702, when he says, it had pleased God to lengthen his life "to the years of Barzillai," examined the books of the New Testament *seriatim* upon this subject, and considered it "proved, by a strong stream of Scripture-texts, that Christ's second coming, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment, is the time certainly appointed for Christ's distributing rewards and punishments future to this life," that "there is no other time appointed or mentioned in Scripture when such recompenses are warrantably to be expected," and "that the human soul's separate subsistence is a fiction, such as hath not a real being in the nature of things." *Search after Souls*, &c. 1706, II. pp. 91, 92. Dr. Coward, also, has shewn "that it is a doctrine or belief most consonant to the whole tenour of the Holy Scriptures, that human soul and life are the same thing, and consequently the notion of a spiritual, immortal substance in man is erroneous; and, according to the common course of Providence, man's immortality begins not until the resurrection." *Second Thoughts concerning Human Soul*, 1702, Ch. vii. p. 177.

PART III.

THE

**DOCTRINES**

OF

**REVEALED RELIGION.**

As the Jewish and Christian religions have been proved to be founded on a series of revelations of the will of God to man, the history of which is recorded in the Old and New Testaments, it behoves us to examine these books with care ; taking it for granted, that they contain truths of the greatest importance to our happiness.

In this part of my work, therefore, I propose to exhibit, with as much fidelity and distinctness as I can, all the *general knowledge* that can, with certainty, be collected from these books, which are usually, and very deservedly, termed *sacred*. I shall be careful, however, to keep as far as possible from all controversy, and simply recite what appears to me to be contained in the Scriptures, just as I think I should have done if I had never heard of any controversy upon the subject. Every thing that has been the subject of much contention and debate, I shall reserve for another work, which will be appropriated to a view of the corruptions of Christianity.

As I divided the subject of natural religion into three parts, the first containing what we are able to learn from thence concerning *God*, the second concerning *our duty*, and the third concerning our *future expectations*, I shall adhere to the same general division in this part of my work also ; by which means it will be more easily and distinctly seen what *additional*, what *fuller*, and *clearer* knowledge, we receive on these important subjects from Divine Revelation.

## CHAPTER I.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING  
GOD.

This first chapter I shall subdivide into two others, the first respecting the *unity*, as also the *natural perfections* and *providence* of God, and the second his *moral perfections*.

## SECTION I.

*Of the Unity, the Natural Perfections, and Providence of God.*

ONE of the most important of all the truths concerning God, as that invisible Being, who is the object of our supreme reverence, and to whom we address ourselves in prayer, as our immediate inspector, and moral governor, is his *unity*. That there is but one God, we have seen to be a truth deducible from the observation of the works of nature; but it is not so easily and clearly deducible from thence, but that mankind have always been prone to fall into *idolatry*, or the worship of more gods than one; which seems to have arisen chiefly from the very low and imperfect ideas that men entertained of the knowledge and power of God.

Judging of all other intelligent beings by themselves, they had no conception of one superintending mind only, being sufficient for all the purposes for which the presence and agency of the Deity was supposed to be requisite; and therefore they imagined, that there must, of necessity, be a multiplicity of beings of that character, each superintending his respective province in nature. If they retained the idea of one *supreme* God, which seems to have been the belief of all mankind in the earliest ages, (handed down, I believe, by tradition from Noah and his immediate descendants,) they still did not think that this one Supreme Being could govern the world without the assistance of other *subordinate* beings, of an intermediate nature between himself and man. These subordinate agents they would therefore consider as the beings with whom they had immediately to do, and whom their religious worship and homage would respect; while

the worship of the Supreme Being would be in danger of being neglected.

This was the actual progress of things in the Heathen world. Mankind began with the worship of one true God; but, having afterwards associated with him various inferior beings, as objects of divine worship, they, in time, lost sight of the Supreme Being altogether; so that none of the objects of the popular worship among the Greeks or Romans were any thing more than either the sun, moon and stars, the souls of dead men, or their images, symbols, &c.

With these general ideas, which are the foundation of all idolatry, mankind would naturally, in the first place, pitch upon the most illustrious objects in the creation, as instruments in the hands of the Supreme Being of communicating blessings to them, or inflicting judgments upon them; and these they would consider as the most proper to be placed in the order of gods. Accordingly we find, that the sun, moon and stars, were universally the first objects of idolatrous worship, as those beings from which it was supposed that men had the most to hope or to fear. And being sensible that *intelligence* was necessary to their office of superintending the affairs of men, they either imagined them to be animated by some intelligent minds, or to be the habitations of such beings.

Imagining also that there must be something in man besides what is visible, they conceived that a spirit, capable of being separated from him, animated him also; and, supposing that the powers of this animating spirit might even be enlarged after death, they made the most illustrious of their princes and heroes the objects of divine worship likewise. Afterwards, imagining that various parts both of the animate and inanimate creation bore a peculiar relation to these gods, with respect to their names, forms, or qualities, they first entertained a respect for them as the symbols or tokens of the presence of their gods, and in time proceeded to conceive of them as being themselves endowed with supernatural powers. In this manner, probably, the ancient Egyptians came to rank a great number of both animals and vegetables, and also their images, &c. among their divinities.

By proceeding in this train, it came to pass, as I have observed already, that at length the one living and true God, the Creator and Governor of the world, was overlooked and forgotten by mankind. The necessary consequence of

this was, that, besides entertaining very false, unworthy and injurious ideas of God and his perfections, mankind were destitute of that most excellent means of exalting their conceptions, and consequently of improving their natures, which is derived from the contemplation of, and a sense of their constant intercourse with, a Being in whom all venerable and amiable attributes unite. It is a sense of our immediate dependence upon, and constant intercourse with, a Being, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, and, at the same time, perfectly holy, just and good, that can alone inspire that deep reverence, humility, gratitude, submission and confidence, which gives the greatest dignity to our sentiments, the noblest ardour to our best affections, the most serene and cheerful temper of mind, under all events, and which thereby qualifies and prompts us to act our parts in life to the most advantage, so as to make the most of our situation in every respect, by being happy ourselves, and contributing to the happiness of others.

Whenever we quit our hold of this great doctrine of the *divine unity*, and imagine that there is no one object of our worship in whom all venerable and all amiable attributes unite, there is nothing we can contemplate that is capable of impressing our minds so *forcibly*, or in so *happy* a manner. Our attention being divided by a multiplicity of objects of worship, and our ideas of their characters being necessarily different, our affections, with respect to them, will also vary, so that we shall be apt to love some of them, and be afraid of others; and since, in consequence of distributing the Divine attributes among a number of beings, they will all of them be, necessarily, brought nearer to our own level, both our fear and love will be in danger of becoming little more than such as beings like ourselves are capable of inspiring. It is also impossible but that, while we imagine there is such a multiplicity of superior beings, which consequently must have their peculiar characters, we shall suppose them to have their peculiar tastes and inclinations, and that those of some of them will interfere with those of others.

Lastly, it can hardly be, but that, among such a number of deities, of inferior natures and characters, the creatures of men's imagination, and consequently supposed to be in many respects like themselves, some of them will be supposed to be capable of such *capricious* fancies as men are influenced by; and consequently that, in order to please

them, mankind would be led to a variety of superstitious and unmeaning practices, and even such as are immoral and destructive.

This appears to have been the natural and universal consequence of polytheism; so that, though at first sight it may seem to be a matter of speculation only, whether there be more gods than one, it has, in fact, the most serious and alarming consequences in practice. By breaking the unity of God, and distributing his attributes among a number of beings, the character of the Divine administration was debased, a multiplicity of rites were devised, in order to please a multiplicity of deities, and some of them were whimsical, some flagitious, and some cruel.

That the doctrine of the Divine unity is a doctrine of very great importance, may be inferred with certainty, from the very great stress that is every where laid upon it in the Scriptures. The sacred writers always speak of one Being, of incomprehensible power, wisdom and goodness, as the only Maker, Preserver and Sovereign Disposer of all things, who has existed from all eternity, and who is absolutely unchangeable in his nature or designs. He is the only invisible being to whom we are authorized to address ourselves by prayer, while the worship of other beings is forbidden in the strongest manner; and other gods, whether supposed to be equal or subordinate to him, are spoken of with the greatest indignation and contempt. More especially, whereas some of the Heathen gods were thought to preside over some particular parts of nature only, and others over other parts, and some of them were supposed to be the authors of good, and others of evil; *universal dominion* is always ascribed to the one true God, and also the appointment of both good and evil, respecting both individuals and nations of mankind.

Indeed, it is not possible to form an idea of the justness or propriety of those magnificent descriptions of the perfections and government of God, which occur in the books of Scripture, without keeping in view the very low ideas which other nations entertained of their gods; nor can we see the propriety of this subject being so much enlarged upon, and the precepts founded upon it being so frequently repeated, or of the sanctions appointed to guard it being made so awful, without considering that very great propensity to idolatry which has ever been discovered by mankind, and the dreadful consequences of it with respect to the depravity which it has never failed to introduce into the sentiments

and hearts of men, and the abominable and horrid customs which it has occasioned, respecting society. Idolatry has never failed to insinuate itself, under some form or other, into every dispensation of religion, insomuch that even Christianity has by no means escaped this dreadful corruption.

Having undertaken to exhibit what it is that we learn from revelation, I shall also endeavour to give some idea of the relative importance of every article of faith, by noting the degree of stress which the sacred writers lay upon each of them; and I do not think that I can do my duty, and fulfil my engagements in this respect, without reciting a considerable number of passages from the books both of the Old and New Testament on this subject, and more especially from the former, which relate to the times in which idolatry was peculiarly prevalent. To preserve in the world the knowledge and worship of the one true God, seems, indeed, to have been the principal object of the whole Jewish dispensation; and, therefore, we are not surprised that our attention is constantly kept up to it through the whole of the Old Testament history. Besides, we are apt to lose our idea, not only of the *relative*, but also of the *real* importance of this doctrine, without recurring to, and reflecting upon what we read in the Old Testament concerning it.

The first of the Ten Commandments, pronounced by an audible and supernatural voice from Mount Sinai, in the hearing of all the Israelites, relates to this subject only. Exod. xx. 3: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The same doctrine of the unity of God, and the sentiments which result from it, are also frequently inculcated in all the writings of Moses; as, Deut. vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

This passage of Moses is also quoted by our Lord, as containing the first and the most important of all the commandments in the law. Mark xii. 28—30: "And one of the scribes came and asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment."

The Divine Being himself, in a very emphatical manner, asserts his sole title to Divinity in Isa. xlv. 6 & 8: "Thus

saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts. I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.—Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

The same doctrine is not only always supposed, but it is likewise frequently and very expressly inculcated in the New Testament; as in 1 Tim. ii. 5, “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” and, 1 Cor. viii. 4—6, “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one: for though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many), but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” The apostle James also mentions this doctrine in such a manner as plainly shews that he considered it as the most incontestable maxim in religion. James ii. 19: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well.”

The worship of the true God by images or symbols, &c. is also most expressly forbidden in the Old Testament. This species of idolatry was commonly practised at the time of the promulgation of the Law, and the second of the Ten Commandments is appropriated to the prohibition of it. Exod. xx. 4—6: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing, that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.”

To enforce this command, Moses is particularly careful to remind the Israelites, that when God spake to them from Mount Sinai, they saw no resemblance whatever, but only heard a voice. Deut. iv. 12—20: “And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude, only ye heard a voice.—Take ye, therefore, good heed to yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any

figure, the likeness of male or female ; the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth : and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and, when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day."

The reason of this prohibition seems to be, that, in consequence of making use of images, though only as symbols, or tokens of the Divine presence, Divine powers will at length, by the natural association of ideas, be transferred to them, and will be supposed to reside in them, and to belong to them. This, indeed, has always been, in fact, the progress of human sentiments. Otherwise different images of the same god in the Heathen world, or of the same saint in Popish countries, could never have been imagined to be possessed of different powers, which is well known to be the case ; so that, whatever may have been the *origin* of this mode of worship, and in whatever light it may be viewed by the more intelligent of those who practise and apologise for it ; with the common people, at least, it is, in reality, nothing but the worship of wood, and stone, and metal ; and in this light it is justly considered by the sacred writers. With a view to exclude this kind of worship, God is likewise said to be *invisible*, Heb. xi. 27, and to dwell "in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see." 1 Tim. vi. 16.

The *works of creation* are in a peculiar manner ascribed to the one true God, and especially the creation of the heavenly bodies, which were the first objects of idolatrous worship in the Gentile world. The first book of Moses begins with reciting all the visible parts of the universe as the work and appointment of God. Gen. i. 1: "In the beginning God created the heaven, and the earth." Ver. 16: "And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night : he made the stars also." The ease with which all these magnificent works were produced is most happily expressed, by representing them as the immediate effect of a simple command. Gen. i. 3: "And God said, Let there be light ; and there was light." In the

same manner, also, the Psalmist expresses it. Ps. xxxiii. 6 & 9: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.—He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

The vain pretences of the Heathen gods are exposed on this very account, viz. their not having made the world. Jer. x. 10—12: "The Lord is the true God,—and an everlasting King.—The gods that have not made the heavens, and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion."

When the people of Lystra would have paid Divine honours to Barnabas and Paul, supposing the former of them to have been Jupiter, and the latter Mercury; Paul, with peculiar propriety, says to them, Acts xiv. 15, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities, unto the living God, which made the heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." For neither the people of Lystra, nor any of the idolatrous Greeks or Romans, had the least idea even of Jupiter, the chief of their gods, having been at all concerned in the creation of the heavens or the earth. To the same purpose, also, the apostle Paul addresses himself to the people of Athens. Acts xvii. 24—26: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing; seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." All this excellent doctrine would be quite new to his Athenian audience, who had never been used to ascribe such extraordinary powers to any of the gods which were the objects of their worship.

The absolute *property* which the only true God has in the works of which he is the author, is often finely expressed in the books of Scripture. Abraham, addressing himself to the Supreme Being, calls him "the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." Gen. xiv. 22. David, in his last speech, delivered in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, addressing himself to God, says, 1 Chron. xxix. 10, 11, "Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel, our Father,

for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted, as head above all." Ps. xxiv. 1, 2 : " The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein ; for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Ps. xcv. 3—7 : " The Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth, the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it ; and his hand formed the dry land. O come, let us worship, and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker ; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." Moses also was careful to impress the Israelites with this important truth, as well as with the belief of the unity, and creating power of God. Deut. x. 14 : " Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is."

The absolute sovereignty of God is also strongly expressed by Paul, 1 Cor. iii. 21 and 23 : " Let no man glory in men, for all things are yours,—and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Also, 1 Cor. xv. 24—28 : " Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power ; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.—But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest, that he is excepted who did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all-in all."

The one true God is also represented, in the Scriptures, as the sole *preserver*, and constant *upholder* of all things. Upon the occasion of the solemn fast, and prayer, which was observed by the Jews upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, they say, Neh. ix. 5, 6, " Blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the sea and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee." David expresses the same sentiment more fully, Ps. cxix. 90, 91 : " Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this

day, according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants."

The Divine sovereignty, with respect to the *absolute disposal* of all things, is a necessary consequence of his sole property in them; and this also is frequently and strongly expressed in the Scriptures. Ps. ciii. 19: "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all." Perhaps the fullest and most explicit acknowledgment of this kind, is that which was made by Nebuchadnezzar, after his humiliation, Dan. iv. 1—3, 35 and 37: "Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders, that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.—And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

The Divine Being himself makes the following solemn declaration, Is. xlvi. 9—11: "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.—I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." Daniel, in his thanksgiving to God, on account of the revelation that was made to him of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, says, Dan. ii. 20, 21, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his. And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." Cyrus made the same acknowledgment, when, in his decree for rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem, he said, Ezra i. 2, "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."

*Power* and *wisdom* are ascribed to this one God in the highest degree, and in the most emphatical manner in the books of Scripture. Indeed, this is necessarily implied in what has been already recited concerning his being the Maker and Governor of all things. I shall, however, quote a few passages with this view only. In Isa. xxviii. 29, he is said to be “wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;” and in 1 Tim. i. 17, he is called “the only wise God,” and also in Rom. xvi. 27, and Jude 25. But in Isa. xl. 12—29, we have a most magnificent description of the power, wisdom and universal supremacy of the one true God, as opposed to the objects of worship in the Heathen world: “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him,—and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.—All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him, less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God; or what likeness will ye compare unto him?—Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.—Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength.”

The Gentile nations imagined that some gods had power

over one country, and others over another; and even that some had power in the hills, and others in the valleys only. There are, however, two remarkable pieces of history in the Old Testament, in which we find that, for the instruction of the Israelites, the Divine Being particularly attended to, and by the most signal displays of his own power, refuted those absurd opinions.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, imagining that the God of Israel was no other than the God of that particular country, and of no greater power than the gods of other countries, insulted Hezekiah, king of Judah, which he was then about to invade, with a detail of the other kingdoms which he had lately conquered, saying, Isa. xxxvii. 10—13, “Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah, king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly, and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?” Hezekiah, in his prayer to God upon this occasion, avows very different sentiments, acknowledging the supremacy of the one true God, and putting his trust in him only; for laying open the letter which he received from Sennacherib before the Lord, he prayed, saying, Isa. xxxvii. 16—20, “O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know, that thou art the Lord, even thou only.” Upon this prayer, the prophet Isaiah was sent to encourage Hezekiah, with a promise of the utter destruction of the army of Sennacherib, which was presently after accomplished, in a sudden and miraculous manner.

The Syrians having been worsted in the hilly country, during their war with the Israelites, imagined that the God of Israel had power there, but not in the valleys; and, therefore, endeavoured to bring the Israelites to an engagement in a flat country. But there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, 1 Kings xx. 28, "Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The Lord is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys: therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Accordingly the historian informs us, that, in a battle which was fought on the seventh day from that time, the Israelites gained a most signal victory over the Syrians.

It was an opinion that prevailed from very early times in the east, and which spread from thence into the western parts of the world, that the *evil* there is in the world was not the production of a good being, but arose from an evil intelligent principle, either co-ordinate with the good one, or subordinate to him; and as the attributes of the good principle were divided, and distributed by him, among a number of beings, so also invisible powers of an evil nature were multiplied, and became the object of several modes of worship.\* Against this principle of idolatry the strongest declarations are made in the Scriptures, which ascribe both good and evil to the same Supreme Mind, who effects his excellent purposes by means of them both alike.

Thus the Divine Being addressing himself to Cyrus, (though long before that prince was born) in whose country the opinion above-mentioned was most firmly established, says, Isa. xlv. 4—7, "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the West, that there is none besides me, I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." To the same purpose Jeremiah, in Lament. iii. 37, 38, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? Out of the mouth of the Most High, proceedeth not evil and good? And, Amos iii. 6, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

\* See Prid. Con. Pt. I. B. IV. pp. 303—305, on Zoroaster.

Job also is made to express the same sentiment, when he says, Job i. 21, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And again, Job ii. 10, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Lastly, in the course of the Scripture history, not only all prosperous events, but also all calamitous ones, are constantly ascribed to God, as the sole Governor of the world, and the Sovereign Disposer of all events, respecting both nations and individuals of mankind. Thus the destruction of the old world by a flood, as well as the interposition in favour of Noah and his family; the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the saving of Lot; the plagues of Egypt, as well as the deliverance of the Israelites; and also all the good and evil that befel either the Israelites themselves or the neighbouring nations with whom they had intercourse, are equally referred to the same superintending Providence, administering both good and evil, according to the characters and conduct of men.

The most striking ideas are given us in the Scriptures of the *eternity*, the *omnipresence*, and *unchangeable nature* of the true God. I shall only quote a few out of numberless passages to this purpose. Moses, in that prayer of his, which makes the xcth Psalm, addresses the Divine Being in the following manner: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Solomon, at the dedication of his temple, addressing the Divine Being, in the presence of all the people, says, 1 Kings viii. 27, "But will God; indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded?" By the prophet Jeremiah, the Divine Being says, Jer. xxiii. 23, 24, "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth?" saith the Lord. In Ps. xxxiii. 13, we read, "The Lord looketh from heaven: he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike: he considereth all their works."

In the cxxxixth Psalm, we have a most admirable description of the *universal presence* of God, and also of the intimate knowledge that he has of every thing belonging to man.

Ps. cxxxix. 1—12, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

The knowledge which the Divine Being has of the *hearts of men*, whatever pains they may take to conceal them, is strongly expressed in Jer. xvii. 9, 10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

The *unchangeable nature* of God is strongly asserted by himself in Mal. iii. 6, "I am the Lord, I change not:" and it is likewise expressed, in a peculiarly beautiful and emphatical manner, Ps. cii. 25—27, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old, like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." The apostle James also says, ch. i. 17, with God there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Lastly, the *incomprehensible nature* of God is finely expressed in several parts of Scripture, especially in the following passages of the book of Job. xi. 7—9: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." xxxvi. 26: "Behold, God is great, and we know him not." xxxvii. 23: "Touching the Almighty,

we cannot find him out." David also says, Ps. cxlv. 3, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."

The pretences of the *Heathen gods* are refuted in several parts of Scripture in a most effectual, and sometimes in a very humourous manner. It is with respect to the knowledge of *future events* that the true God more especially challenges the gods of the Heathens; as in Isa. xli. 21—24, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them, or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you."

When it is foretold that the idols of Babylon should be carried away captive, it is said, Isa. xlvi. 1, 2, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity." Jeremiah also ridicules these gods in a similar manner. Jer. x. 1—7: "Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the Heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest (the work of the hands of the workman) with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold, they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go: be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord, thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O king of nations, for to thee doth it appertain."

The overthrow of Pharaoh and his host is represented by Moses as the triumph of the true God over the false ones. Ex. xv. 2: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation." Ver. 11: "Who is like unto thee, O

Lord, amongst the gods ; who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ?”

Elijah makes use of a fine piece of irony, when he addresses the priests of Baal, on the occasion of the contest which he proposed between the true God and that imaginary one. When these priests were unable to procure a supernatural fire, to burn their sacrifices, we read 1 Kings xviii. 27—29, “ And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud : for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them ;—but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.” At the conclusion of this affair, the people, who were exceedingly prone to idolatry, and therefore strongly prejudiced in favour of the priests of Baal, cried out, ver. 39, “ The Lord, he is the God ; the Lord, he is the God.”

We find in the book of Daniel, that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, though strongly attached to their idol worship, were compelled to make the same confession. See Dan. ii. 47, and iii. 29. When Daniel was delivered from the lions, we are informed, Dan. vi. 25, 26, that “ then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel : for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.”

Considering the abominable flagitious customs, and the cruel and horrid rites of the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan, and other neighbouring nations, and the shocking depravity of the hearts, as well as of the lives of men, which was the necessary consequence of an addictedness to those monstrous kinds of idolatry, it is no wonder that all possible provision was made to prevent the Israelites from giving into it, and to perpetuate in that one nation the worship of the only living and true God, amidst the universal defection from his worship among all other nations.

Abraham is supposed to have been called from his country, where idolatry is generally thought to have been first

introduced, about the time when it began to revolt from the worship of the true God,\* and it is not improbable that this was the case, as not long after we find idols among the gods of Laban, who lived in the same country; that his daughter Rachel carried some of them away with her, and that afterwards Jacob was obliged to search all his family, and commanded them to put away all their false gods. See Gen. xxxv. 2.

The prohibitions of idolatry by Moses are frequent, and exceedingly emphatical. Besides the first and second commandments, quoted before, we read, Ex. xxiii. 13, "And in all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect; and make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth."

The orders which the Jews received concerning the extirpation of the inhabitants of Canaan respected this case, and nothing else. The settlement of the Israelites in that country, is expressly said to have been delayed because "the iniquity of the Amorites *was* not yet full." Gen. xv. 16. We read in Deut. xii. 29—31, "When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land: take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord which he hateth, have they done unto their gods: for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods." Deut. xii. 2, 3: "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree. And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire, and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place."

That their motive for this was not the lust of plunder, is evident from the orders which they received, and with which they complied, not to take the silver and the gold belonging to their idols, but to destroy it utterly. Deut. vii. 25, 26: "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn

\* See Shuckford's Con. I. B. v. 3d Ed. pp. 270 and 282. Law's Theory, p. 72.

with fire; thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thy house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing."

Nor were they the inhabitants of Canaan only, who were to be extirpated on account of their idolatry; for the Israelites themselves were to have as little mercy shewn them on the same account. Lev. xx. 1, 2: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Again thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones." Deut. xiii. 6—18: "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers: namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is, among you. If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which ye have not known. Then shalt thou inquire and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you, thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every

whit, for the Lord thy God : and it shall be an heap for ever, it shall not be built again. And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand ; that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God."

These were certainly severe and awful measures ; but they are abundantly vindicated by the consideration of the evils which they were intended to prevent. These evils were, indeed, of the most alarming nature, defeating the very end of the whole Jewish constitution, which was especially calculated to preserve the knowledge and worship of the one true God amidst a general defection from it, and to put a stop to the progress of the most abominable and destructive vices, which was the necessary consequence of that defection.

The Divine displeasure at idolatry was likewise expressed by the utter destruction of all the idolatrous nations of ancient times, viz. the Canaanites, Egyptians, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Tyrians ; and also by the repeated captivities, and other awful judgments, which never failed to be inflicted upon the Israelites themselves, whenever they revolted from the one true God.

In the New Testament these awful denunciations of the judgments of God against idolatry are not repeated with respect to the Jews, because that people had been effectually cured of their proneness to idolatry by the Babylonish captivity ; but we see the same sentiments kept up, and referred to, upon every proper occasion, and very pressing exhortations and cautions are given to the Gentile churches respecting this subject. Our Lord replies to his tempter, by quoting the books of Moses. Matt. iv. 10 : " Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The abstaining from meats offered to idols was one of the *necessary things* which all the apostles enjoined upon the Gentile converts. Acts xv. 29. The apostle Paul most earnestly and affectionately warns the Corinthian converts on this subject. 1 Cor. x. 7 : " Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them ;" (that is, the Israelites). Ver. 14 : " Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Ver. 19—21 : " What say I then ? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing ? But

I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to *demons*,\* and not to God : and I would not that ye should have fellowship with *demons*. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of *demons* : ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of *demons*." The apostle John also concludes his General Epistle to the Christian churches with these words, 1 John v. 21 : " Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Lastly, the eating of meat sacrificed to idols was one of the charges which our Lord, after his ascension, brought against the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira, Rev. ii. 14 & 20.

Through the whole of the New Testament there is not so much as one example of any invisible being, who is addressed as the object of prayer, but the same one living and true God, who is also called " the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Eph. iii. 14 : " For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,") and every instance of homage approaching to Divine is strongly repressed. When Cornelius fell down at the feet of Peter, though it cannot be supposed that he, who was himself a worshipper of the true God, meant to pay him divine honours, the apostle replied, Acts x. 26, " Stand up ; I myself also am a man." And twice that John fell down before the angel who was explaining to him the visions of the book of Revelation, he was rebuked in the same manner. Rev. xix. 10 : " See thou do it not ; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus : worship God." And xxii. 9.†

Considering how strongly this great article, the worship of one God only, is guarded in all the books of Scripture, it would seem impossible that it should ever be infringed by any who profess to hold the books of the Old and New Testament for the rule of their faith and practice ; and yet we shall see that this very article was the subject of one of the first and the most radical of all the corruptions of Christianity. For upon the very same principles, and in the very same manner, by which dead men came to be worshipped by the ancient idolaters, there was introduced into the Christian church, in the first place, the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ, then that of the Virgin Mary, and, lastly, that of

\* For so it ought to have been translated. P.

† Erasmus thus paraphrases this verse : " But he would not accept and receive such honour and worship at my hands, nor was not content therewith ; whereby I am taught that I should utterly honour and worship none but only the Almighty God." It has been, probably, conjectured that Christ himself was the Angel, in this passage. See Impr. Vers. *ad Loc.* Note.

innumerable other saints, and of angels also ; and this *modern Christian idolatry* has been attended with all the absurdities, and with *some*, but not *all* the immoralities, of the ancient Heathen idolatry.\* It has, however, evidently promoted a very great neglect of the duties we owe both to God and man.

## SECTION II.

### *Of the Moral Attributes of God.*

THAT God is a Being of the greatest *purity* and *rectitude* is another important doctrine of revealed religion ; and though, like the doctrine of the Divine *unity*, it may be said to be the dictate of nature, it was a doctrine which mankind had in a great measure overlooked, and never sufficiently attended to. Entertaining low notions of the beings on whom they supposed that they immediately depended, and ascribing to them a great variety of objects and pursuits, some of which were exceedingly trifling and unworthy, they had recourse to a variety of methods by which they thought to recommend themselves to their favour, many of which had no connexion with moral virtue, and some of them were gross violations of the most fundamental rules of it.

Judging of their gods as having been, many of them, men no better than themselves, but subject to envy and jealousy, they were in general, more especially prone to that kind of superstition which consists in mortifying themselves, in order to recommend them to God. If any great calamity befel them, imagining the wrath of their gods was to be appeased, like that of revengeful and unreasonable men, with something that cost them very dear, they sometimes did not spare their own children, but put them to a cruel death in their sacrifices ; and they made dreadful havock of the rest of their species on much less occasions.

In the Jewish and Christian revelations, on the contrary, we see the moral character of the Divine Being set in the clearest, the strongest and most amiable light. We find that the God with whom we have to do loves all his creatures ; that if he chastises them it is with reluctance, and only for their good, and especially for their improvement in virtue ; that he stands in no need of any of his creatures, and has no pleasure either in the compliments they pay him, or the gifts and sacrifices which they make to him, though, as an

\* See Lindsey. *Conversations on Christian Idolatry.*

expression of their homage, dependence and gratitude, he may think proper to require such things.

The proper seat of virtue and solid happiness being in the heart, the Divine Being, as his character is revealed to us in our books of Scripture, appears to be most solicitous that our hearts and affections be right, and not to pay much attention to mere external actions, which was every thing that the Heathen gods were imagined to trouble themselves about. On the contrary, the God of the Jews and Christians is always represented as searching the hearts, and as attending to the inmost thoughts, inclinations and purposes of the mind; so that no secret or intended iniquity can escape his animadversion.

In order to exhibit the doctrines of the Scriptures concerning the moral attributes of God, I shall, first, consider his *purity* or *holiness*, including his regard to moral virtue in general, and then his goodness, mercy and veracity, in the order in which they are here mentioned.

Passages which express the purity or holiness of God in general, are exceedingly numerous, and many of them very emphatical; as, Lev. xix. 2, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." The angels, in the vision of Isaiah vi. 3, are represented as crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Moses, in that remarkable song which he composed for the Israelites, in order that they might commit it to memory, says, Deut. xxxii. 3, 4, "I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Habbakuk, addressing himself to God, says, ch. i. 12, 13, "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine holy one?—Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." When David enumerates the particulars which constitute the character of the man who is most in favour with God, he draws a picture of the most distinguished moral virtue. Ps. xv. 1, 2, &c: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle; who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, &c." Lastly, the apostle James says, ch. i. 13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

A thousand passages in the Scriptures express the pleasure

which God takes in good men, and the happiness which he reserves for them. Ps. cxlvii. 2: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Ps. ciii. 13: "Like as a father pitieth his children: so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." On the other hand, the wicked are always represented as the sole objects of the Divine displeasure and vengeance; as Isa. lvii. 21: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" and xlviii. 22. And all the judgments which the Divine Being is represented as interposing to inflict, are always said to have been on the account of wickedness only, as in the case of our first parents, the inhabitants of the old world, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, and many others.

Whereas the favour of the Heathen gods was supposed to be gained by the performance of certain rites and ceremonies, while moral virtue was seldom thought to be of any use for that purpose; the contrary is expressed in the strongest terms, with respect to the true God; and admonitions of this kind are repeated again and again in the books of Scripture. David, confessing his sins before God, says, Ps. li. 16, 17, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." One of the finest passages in the sacred writings to this purpose is, Isa. i. 10—18: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats." When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them. And

when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you : yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear : your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The same sentiment is also admirably expressed in Micah vi. 6—8 : " Where-with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?" To the same purpose see also Ps. l. 8—23. Jer. vii. 2—10. Hos. vi. 6, and Amos v. 21—24.

In the New Testament, we find John the Baptist exposing the vain confidence of the Jews, on account of their having Abraham for their father ; Matt. iii. 9 : and our Saviour also, when they made the same boast, in his presence, says, John viii. 39 and 44, " If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.—Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Again, speaking of his natural relations, he says, Matt. xii. 50, " Whosoever shall do the will of my father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister and mother."

If we consider the great object and end of all the parts of the scheme of revelation, we cannot but see that it was intended to promote the practice of moral virtue, in order to men's attaining to the greatest degrees of perfection and happiness. The Ten Commandments, which God spake from Sinai, are all of a moral, and most of them of a social nature. His earnest exhortations to the Israelites, through the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, enforces the practice of virtue in the strongest manner ; and so do all the writings of the prophets. The purport of their earnest exhortations is, " Cease to do evil, learn to do well ; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways ; why will ye die, O house of Israel ?"

*Repentance and works meet for repentance*, was the chief subject of John the Baptist's preaching, and also of that of

our Saviour. Our Lord's admirable sermon on the mount, consists chiefly of precepts of the most sublime moral virtue ; and he represents the fate of all mankind at the last day, as determined by a regard to their moral character only, and especially their benevolence.

Whenever the general design of the gospel is mentioned, it is always spoken of as intended to reform and bless mankind. Thus the apostle Peter, in his address to the Jews, after the effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, Acts iii. 26, " God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." To the same purpose the apostle Paul, Titus ii. 11—14: " The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ : who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And our Lord himself says, John xv. 8, " Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

Lastly, it is impossible that the practice of universal virtue, absolute or relative, should be more strongly enforced than it is in all the apostolical epistles, and especially towards the close of them. See Rom. ii. 4—12. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Eph. i. 4, v. 2—4. 1 Thess. v. 22. The Epistle of James throughout. 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12. 1 John iv. 20, 21.

It is in vain that we look for any thing that can be compared with this in any system of Heathen religion. Almost the best that can be said of them is, that they enjoin practices that are merely idle and insignificant, for too often they countenance the most destructive vices.

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Goodness of God.*

THE goodness of God seems to be pretty clearly inferred from a view of the works of creation, a benevolent design being sufficiently manifest in every thing that we understand. Indeed the great mixture that we see of *apparent evil* is apt to stagger even well disposed minds, especially when themselves are affected by it ; but in the Scriptures we see all these doubts removed. All events are promiscuously ascribed to God ; but his intention is represented

as being good and kind, even when his proceedings are the most severe. David, addressing himself to God, says, Ps. cxix. 68, "Thou art good, and doest good." Ps. cxlv. 9, "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Ps. xxxiii. 5, "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Ps. cxlv. 15, 16, "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. . Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Our Lord says, Matt. xix. 17, "There is none good but one, that is God;" and in his sermon upon the mount, he enforces the duty of universal benevolence by the consideration of that of our heavenly Father. Matt. v. 45: "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." The apostle John expresses himself in the most emphatical manner concerning this subject, when he says, 1 John iv. 16, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." And the apostle James says, ch. i. 17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

The severity with which good men are sometimes treated, is always represented in the Scriptures as the correction of a tender father, intended to promote the reformation and good of his children; and what he always inflicts with reluctance. Jeremiah says, Lam. iii. 31—33, "The Lord will not cast off for ever. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." The prophet Hosea draws a most affecting picture of the painful reluctance with which the Divine Being has recourse to severity, after the most aggravated and repeated provocations. Hosea xi. 1—9: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.—They sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.—My people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my

repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee."

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, also, reminds the persecuted Christians of his age, of these comforting sentiments, so peculiarly proper to their circumstances. Heb. xii. 5—11: "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?—Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby."

Lastly, the dispensation of the gospel is always represented as an instance of the exceedingly great love and goodness of God. John iii. 16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." 1 John iv. 9, 10: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." Rom. viii. 32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

## SECTION IV.

### *Of the Mercy of God.*

THE mercy of God to those who are disposed to return to their duty, when they have once rendered themselves obnoxious to his displeasure by their offences, is a subject of which mankind, especially those whose minds were rendered timid and fearful by a consciousness of guilt, would be more apt to entertain doubts, than of the goodness of God in general. No proof, by way of *inference* only, how short and plain soever, would be sufficient for such persons; and yet it is easy to see, that it is of the utmost importance that such persons should receive all possible satisfaction with respect to it: lest, through a distrust of the mercy of God, they should be driven into absolute despair. Besides,

nothing is so engaging, and furnishes so powerful a motive to a return to duty, as a thorough persuasion of the clemency of the offended party. On this account, probably, it is, that the declarations of the mercy of God to the truly penitent, are so remarkably full and explicit in the Scriptures, inso-much that no doubt can possibly remain with respect to it.

At the very time of the promulgation of the law of Moses, which is deemed to be the most rigorous of all the Divine dispensations, when Moses waited in Mount Sinai with the second tables of stone, immediately after that most aggravated offence of the Israelites in making the golden calf, the Divine Being makes the most solemn declaration of his mercy imaginable. *Exod. xxxiv. 5—7*: “And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

When Moses foretels the final dispersion of the Israelites, in consequence of their idolatry, and other vices, he at the same time gives them the most solemn assurances of the Divine favour in case of their repentance. I shall quote two remarkable passages for this purpose. *Deut. iv. 25—31*: “When thou shalt beget children, and children’s children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it: ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the Heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice, (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.” *Deut.*

xxx. 1—5: “And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind, among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice, according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart and with all thy soul: that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it, and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.”

To these promises Daniel had recourse, when he made confession and prayer to God on the behalf of Israel, during the Babylonish captivity. Dan. ix. 8, 9: “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.” The prophet Jeremiah also repeats the same promises of mercy and restoration, with a view to the same case. Jer. iii. 12 and 14: “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.—Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you: and I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.”

The declarations of Divine mercy to penitent offenders, upon a great variety of occasions, in the course of the Jewish history, and especially in the book of Psalms, and of the prophets, who wrote in times of great degeneracy, are remarkably emphatical; and to give us the stronger foundation for our confidence in the Divine mercy it is always represented as arising *from himself only*, from that love and compassion which is essential to his nature, and which he bears to all the works of his hands. We cannot so much as collect from any of them the most distant hint of its arising from any foreign consideration whatever; and this was certainly a matter of the greatest consequence;

since a suspicion of this kind would tend to beget an idea of uncertainty, or partiality in the distribution of the Divine mercy.

Indeed, every idea of this nature seems to be expressly excluded in several passages of Scripture, as in that declaration which the Divine Being makes by the prophet Isaiah, xliii. 22—25, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.—Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions *for mine own sake*, and will not remember thy sins.” David, it is evident, had no other idea when he prayed for the forgiveness of his sins, Ps. xxv. 6—11, “Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving-kindnesses, for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me, *for thy goodness’ sake*, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep his covenant, and his testimonies. *For thy name’s sake*, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great.”

On this most important and agreeable subject, I shall quote a few more passages. Ps. ciii. 8—14: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust.” Ps. lxxxvi. 5: “For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.” Isa. lv. 6, 7: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Ezek. xxxiii. 11: “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” Ver. 14—16: “When I say unto

the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live." Ezek. xviii. 31, 32: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

These passages certainly express more than a *willingness*, they discover a most *earnest desire* in the Divine Being, that sinners should repent and be happy. I shall therefore close these quotations with only one more from Micah vii. 18, 19: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea."

The mercy of God appears not only in such full *declarations* as these, but likewise in the history of his *conduct*, as recorded in the Old Testament. As often as the Israelites repented, after suffering for their frequent apostacies, so often did they find mercy. This was the case, in a remarkable manner, with King Manasseh, and also with Ahab; nor was this grace confined to the Israelites. The inhabitants of Nineveh obtained the same favour on the same equitable terms; for upon Jonah's proclamation, that within forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, we read, Jonah iii. 5—10, that "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them;" and that the king of Nineveh "arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sack-cloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, (by the decree of the king and his nobles) saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sack-cloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that

we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not." Jonah himself was displeased that his prediction was not literally fulfilled; but the acknowledgment which he makes why he was unwilling to undertake the commission, is much to our present purpose. Ch. iv. 1, 2: "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

The above-mentioned declarations of mercy to the penitent, were delivered under the Jewish dispensation, and no person will imagine that they were restricted under the gospel. John the Baptist, the fore-runner of our Lord, our Lord himself, and also his apostles, all opened their respective commissions with the doctrine of repentance for the remission of sins. Matt. iii. 1, 2: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand:" and, ver. 8, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Chap. iv. 17: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is not possible to give a more striking or more beautiful illustration of the propitious nature of the Divine Being, than our Lord has done in the parable of the prodigal son, in which we are informed, Luke xv. 18—20, that as soon as this profligate youth came to himself, and to a resolution to return to his father, and to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;—when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." The Lord's prayer, and the illustration of it by our Lord himself, Matt. vi. 14, assures us, that if we forgive men their trespasses, our heavenly Father will also forgive us. The same doctrine is repeated and enforced by him in his parable of the king who took an account of his servants, one of whom owed him ten thousand talents, Matt. xviii. 23.

The apostle Peter, at the close of his first speech, to a great multitude of Jews, who were assembled on the report of the first great miracle that was wrought after the ascen-

sion of our Lord, viz. the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, says, Acts ii. 38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." The same apostle speaking of the Divine Being, says, 2 Pet. iii. 9, God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" and, to quote no more, the apostle John says, 1 John i. 8, 9, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

## SECTION V.

### *Of the Divine Veracity.*

THE last of the moral attributes of the Divine Being, of which I shall take particular notice, is his *veracity*, or regard to truth, and his fidelity with respect to his promises and engagements. Of this we can have no direct knowledge from the light of nature, though we infer from it that we should have reason to depend upon the truth of all the declarations of the Divine Being, if he should think proper to make any; but in the Scriptures we find both the most express declarations concerning the veracity and faithfulness of God, and likewise a sufficient number of facts corresponding to those declarations.

In Isa. lxv. 16, he is called *the God of truth*. It is said of him, Ps. cxlvi. 6, he "keepeth truth for ever;" and he himself says, Ps. lxxxix. 34, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips:" and Isa. xlv. 11, "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it." Lastly, we read, Heb. vi. 18, "It was impossible for God to lie."

With respect to *facts*, it is sufficient to say, that no instance is mentioned of the Divine Being having failed to fulfil any promise that he had made, respecting either individuals, or nations of mankind; but a great variety of facts are recorded, in which the performance exactly corresponds to the engagement. I shall recite only one of them. After the children of Israel were settled in the land of Canaan, it is said, Josh. xxi. 43—45, "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies

before them: the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any thing good which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."

On such ground as this (the Jewish and Christian religions having been proved to be divine) we have sufficient reason to depend upon the truth of those Divine declarations, the time for the accomplishment of which is not yet come; especially with respect to the grand catastrophe of the whole scheme, viz. that there shall be a resurrection of all the dead, followed by an ample reward for the righteous, and an adequate punishment for the wicked.\*

\* Archbishop Tillotson was one of those serious reflecting persons, of whom probably, no age has been quite destitute, who could not reconcile to benevolence and piety, the common creed of Christians on the momentous question of future punishments. To relieve his perplexity, without impeaching the *Divine veracity*, he offers, in one of his Sermons, the following considerations: "There is this remarkable difference between promises and threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in justice and faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed, but injuriously dealt withal: but in threatnings it is quite otherwise. He that threatens, keeps the right of punishing in his own hand, and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of government do require; and he may without injury to the party threatned, remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned. And because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him. Nor is this any impeachment of God's truth and faithfulness, any more than is esteemed among men, a piece of falsehood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of Nineveh, and his peevish prophet did understand the threatnings to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a message that was not made good. But God understood his own right and did what he pleased, notwithstanding the threatning he had denounced; and for all Jouah was so touched in honour that he had rather himself had died than that Nineveh should not have been destroyed, only to have verified his message." *Sermons*. 1757, VIII. p. 209.—*White*. Pref. xx.

For this Sermon Tillotson has been classed among the *merciful* Doctors and "written against, in Vindication of the *Eternity* of Hell Torments." See "The Restoration of all Things." Pref. Dr. Young also, in 1728, thus *hitched* the Archbishop into rhyme. After describing him as believing in *A Deity*, that's perfectly well-bred, the Satirist makes his female *Free-thinker* exclaim.—

Dear T—l—n! be sure the best of men;  
Nor thought he more than thought great *Origen*;  
Tho', once upon a time, he misbehav'd,  
Poor *Satan*! doubtless he'll, at length, be sav'd.

*Love of Fame*. 1728. Sat. VI. p. 148.

## CHAPTER II.

## OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRES OF MAN.



THE unity, and the moral attributes of God being so clearly revealed to us in the Scriptures, we naturally expect that the chief thing which he will require of man will be purity of heart and integrity of life, or the genuine principles, the uniform practice, and the confirmed habits of all moral virtue; comprehending an unfeigned reverence and love of himself, the highest respect for his authority, and a humble and cheerful submission to all the dispensations of his providence, together with all the natural expressions of our dependence upon him, and obligation to him. We might also expect that he would require of us a sincere regard to the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and all those actions which naturally arise from that generous principle, viz. all the duties of justice, equity and humanity. Lastly, we might expect that his authority should be interposed in favour of those virtues which more immediately respect ourselves, and the government of our appetites and passions; so that in all things we be chaste and temperate, no slaves to violent and unreasonable passions, or to any affection of mind by which we might debase our natures, or expose ourselves to the temptation of disturbing and injuring others.

## SECTION I.

*Of the Duty of Man with Respect to God.*

THE duties of piety, or devotion, consisting of a right disposition of mind with respect to God, and the actions which flow from that disposition, are, in a manner, peculiar to the Jewish and Christian religions; being almost unknown to the Gentile world. But in the Scriptures very great stress is deservedly laid upon them.

In general, the fear and love of God, and an habitual regard to his inspection, authority and example, are represented in the Scriptures as the most effectual guard, and the most powerful and animating principle of virtue; and every

branch of virtue is constantly spoken of as his express command, and as an observance of the laws which he has thought proper to prescribe as the rule of our conduct. Sentiments of this kind are expressed with an infinite diversity of manner through the whole of the Old and New Testament; so that the difference, in this respect, between the books of Scripture and the best moral pieces of the Heathen writers is exceedingly striking.

When Joseph was tempted to commit adultery in the most private manner, he replied, Gen. xxxix. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Solomon also says, Prov. ix. 10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and Prov. xvi. 6, "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." We are exhorted to be holy, because God is holy, Lev. xix. 2. 1 Pet. i. 16: to "be perfect, even as *our* Father which is in heaven is perfect," Matt. v. 48; and also to "be followers of God as dear children," Eph. v. 1. And, for this reason, to "be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God *in Christ*\* hath forgiven *us*." Ch. iv. 32.

On the other hand, it is mentioned as characteristic of the wicked, that "there is no fear of God before his eyes," Ps. xxxvi. 1: and that "God is not in all his thoughts," Ps. x. 4.

The disposition of mind which we are required to cultivate, with respect to God, is represented in the Scriptures as a mixture of filial reverence, love and confidence, as to a most affectionate father, and equitable moral governor; and has in it nothing of that terror and anxiety, which is

\* Corrected from the common version for *Christ's sake*, which is also in the text of Erasmus's paraphrase translated in 1549. In thus accommodating the text to their doctrinal prejudices, the English translators, appear not to have been imitated by those of other countries. The Italian Protestant, printed at Lyons in 1551, translates *per Christo*, and the French translations, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, are equally correct. One of the latter, indeed, printed at *Mons* in 1710, by the Jansenists, has in a note, professedly, from the *Greek*, the following extraordinary reading, *comme Jesus Christ nous a pardonné*. Dr. Doddridge translates the passage correctly, yet with the *salvo* of thus bringing the mistranslation into his paraphrase, "*even as God in Christ, and for his sake, hath freely forgiven you*," a description of *free* forgiveness, not the most accurate. There is a note on the place, but no hint of a mistake in the common version. Mr. Lindsey might have added this passage to his instances of that Expositor's *management*. See *Historical View*, pp. 32—40. As specimens of *management* in times nearer the Reformation, the following may suffice: Bishop Latimer in his 3rd Sermon, before Edward the 6th, in 1549, quotes as the *saying* of Christ, "Whatsoever ye ask my Father in my name shall be given you, through my merits." Bishop Hall in his *Satan's Fiery Darts quenched*, quotes as from 2 Cor. xiii. 4, "He was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth in the power of his Godhead." See Latimer's Sermons, 8vo. 1758, l. p. 119, and *Satan's Fiery Darts*, &c. by J. H. D. D. B. N. 18mo. 1647, p. 2.

inspired by a subjection to a cruel or capricious being. On this account we are sometimes commanded to "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling," Ps. ii. 11 : and at other times to "serve the Lord with gladness," Ps. c. 2. Upon the whole, it means a perfect attachment of soul to this greatest and best of Beings, so as to have no will but his, and to respect no interest or authority whatever in comparison with his.

Our Lord, quoting from the law of Moses, says, that "the first and great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," Matt. xxii. 37, 38 : and we are exhorted by him, Luke xii. 4, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear : fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Upon this principle, the apostles Peter and John say, with confidence, to the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, Acts iv. 19, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye."

This habitual regard to God, and entire confidence in him, is also represented as the best support of the mind under all the difficulties and trials of life. David says, Ps. xvi. 8, "I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." The prophet Isaiah, exciting to confidence in God, says, ch. xxvi. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee." Solomon also gives this excellent advice, Prov. iii. 5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths : " and the apostle Peter encourages Christians, in time of trial, to cast their care upon God, who careth for them. 1 Pet. v. 7.

From a firm persuasion that every thing is under the direction of a wise and good Providence, we find in the Scriptures such expressions of hope, joy, and even exultation, in the most calamitous and trying scenes, as Heathens could have no idea of ; because they had no principles from which such sentiments and language could possibly flow. The calm acquiescence of Job under a most afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, has been mentioned already. When Eli heard a message from God by Samuel, the import of which was the greatest calamity that could befall his family, he replied, 1 Sam. iii. 18, "It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good. The

prophet Habakkuk gives us a most admirable description, not merely of the acquiescence, but of the cheerfulness with which afflictive providences should be borne, ch. iii. 17, 18 : “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” David gives the general ground of this satisfaction and confidence in the most obscure scenes of providence, when he says, Ps. xcvi. 1, 2, “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice : let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

On the foundation of this firm persuasion of the favour of God to the righteous, and the certainty of the reward which he reserves for them, our Lord encourages his followers to the most cheerful bearing of persecution for conscience' sake. Matt. v. 10—12 : “ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Our Lord took the most effectual method to inculcate an entire submission to the will of God, by directing it to be the subject of our daily prayers. Mat vi. 10 : “ Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven ;” and he exhibited an example of this entire submission, in a scene of the greatest distress to which it is probable that human nature was ever subjected, I mean in his agony in the garden, when his soul was “ exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ;” when yet he prayed, saying, Matt. xxvi. 39, “ O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” And again, in his second prayer on that occasion, ver. 42, “ O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” Lastly, the apostle James makes use of exhortations exactly similar to those of our Saviour in the case of persecution, James i. 2 and 12 : “ My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.—Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” And the apostle Peter, on the same occasion, says, 1 Pet. iii. 14,

“ If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye : and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.”

The propriety of *praying* to God is far from being satisfactorily proved from the light of nature, and much less can the obligation of it as a moral duty, be strictly demonstrated upon those principles. Had the practice appeared ever so desirable, the humble and the diffident might have thought it too presumptuous, as much as others would have thought it unnecessary. It is, therefore, with peculiar satisfaction, that, in the Scriptures, we find all the indigent and dependent race of mankind encouraged in the freest and most constant access to God by prayer. And notwithstanding the infinite distance that subsists between the Divine Being as our Creator, and us as his creatures, in the whole of the Scripture history, he appears in the condescending and amiable character of our *Father*, as ready to attend to our wants, as he is able to supply them ; being to us, in reality, what our occasions require him to be ; insomuch, that though he is represented as knowing every thing that we can tell him, even the thoughts of our hearts ; yet, because our nature is such, that we cannot keep up that constant regard to him, in the whole of our conduct, which our own improvement and happiness require, without a free and familiar intercourse with him, such as we maintain with our earthly governors and parents, (our attachment to whom is greatly strengthened, by the genuine and natural expressions of it,) he has been pleased not only to permit, but absolutely to require that intercourse ; expecting that we should both make acknowledgments to him for favours already received, and also apply to him for those which we still want ; not forgetting, however, to express the most entire acquiescence in his will, whether he should think proper to grant our requests or not. Now, this is certainly the very part that a prudent and wise parent would take with a child, though with respect to himself, both the acknowledgments and the requests of the child were ever so unnecessary.

In the Old Testament history, we find prayer to be the constant practice of all good men ; and so far was there from being any doubt concerning the propriety of it, that it is mentioned by Eliphaz as the greatest aggravation of the wickedness which he ascribed to Job, that he even cast off *fear*, and restrained *prayer* before God. Job. xv. 4. It is mentioned as the characteristic of God, that he heareth prayer. Ps. lxxv. 2 : “ O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” Solomon also says, Prov. xv. 8, that “ the

prayer of the upright is his delight ;” and David, Ps. cxlv. 18, 19, “ The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him.—He also will hear their cry, and will save them.”

Our Saviour recommends frequent prayer to his disciples. He also gave them a variety of particular instructions, and was himself a pattern for them, with respect to it. For we not only read of his praying upon particular occasions, (several of which prayers are recorded by the Evangelists,) but it is said, upon one occasion, that he spent even a whole night in prayer to God, Luke vi. 12 ; as if he who received the most from God, and who was therefore the most dependent upon him, thought it necessary to be more particularly careful to express that dependence. Our Lord even encourages great earnestness and importunity in prayer ; one of his parables being particularly calculated to excite men “ always to pray, and not to faint.” Luke xviii. 1—7. “ What man is there of you,” says he, addressing himself to a great multitude, Matt. vii. 9—11, “ whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?”

Our Lord is very careful, however, to inculcate a right disposition of mind in prayer, and particularly cautions his disciples to avoid the ostentation of the Pharisees, and the clamorous repetitions of the Heathens upon that occasion. Matt. vi. 5—8 : “ When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do ; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them ; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” To these excellent admonitions he subjoins that pattern of prayer which we usually call the *Lord's prayer*, which is admirably simple and expressive ; and as the most important of all our petitions is that which we make for the forgiveness of our sins, he is particularly careful to insist upon it, that we make that request with a heart thoroughly reconciled to all those who have

offended us. Matt. vi. 14, 15: "For, if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The apostles also, upon a great variety of occasions, most earnestly recommend frequent prayer. 1 Thess. v. 17: "Pray without ceasing." Rom. xii. 12: "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Philip. iv. 6: "Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2: "I exhort—that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks; be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority." This apostle does not fail, however, to recommend a proper temper of mind in prayer, when he adds, ver. 8, "I will—that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

When persons are under affliction, they are more especially disposed to have recourse to prayer. Seeing no other hope, they fly to God, as their all-sufficient Saviour and friend; and this natural propensity of the mind is particularly encouraged by the apostle James, v. 13: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray."

Though the greatest stress is laid, in the Scriptures, upon *private* devotion, it is by no means so much so, as to set aside the obligation of *social worship*, which is also much insisted upon in them. The sacrifices which were appointed to be made every morning and evening in the Jewish tabernacle, or temple, were offered in the name of the whole nation; and as many persons as conveniently could, did usually attend during the ceremony, and offered up their prayers, while the priest went into the temple to burn incense. Luke i. 10: "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." David expresses the high satisfaction which he received from those opportunities of public worship, in several of his Psalms, as, Ps. xxvi. 8: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." Ps. cxxii. 1: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." And Ps. lxxxiv. 1 and 10: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!—A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." He also recommends the greatest reverence upon these occasions. Ps. lxxxix. 7: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly

of the saints ; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."

Though we have no particular accounts of the customs of the Jews, in ancient times, with respect to the manner in which they spent their sabbaths, yet, since they were commanded to rest from all labour on those days, and were enjoined to read and meditate on their law *at all times*, Deut. vi. 7, we cannot but suppose that they employed those days, in which they had most leisure for that purpose, in reading, meditation and prayer ; and several passages in the Old Testament seem pretty plainly to allude to such a custom. We find, however, in the time of our Saviour, that *synagogues* were established through the whole country of Judea, and in all other countries where the Jews had any settlement ; and in these places the books of the law and the prophets were regularly read, and prayers made every sabbath-day. These services our Lord himself stately attended, as Luke informs us, ch. iv. 16 : " As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day." And the same exercises were continued by the apostles in all Christian churches, which were formed upon the same general plan, and have been transmitted through all ages to this day.

## SECTION II.

### *Of the Social Duties.*

It would be tedious, and is by no means necessary, to go over all the articles of *social duty*, as they are explained and enforced in the Scriptures. Whatever I have observed, in the First Part of these Institutes, as the dictate of Nature, is strongly inculcated in the books of the Old and New Testament, and recommended by motives and considerations peculiar to revelation. I must not omit, however, to observe, that the prophets in the Old Testament, and our Saviour and the apostles in the New, do not content themselves with giving instructions, concerning men's conduct in particular cases and instances, but are more especially careful to inculcate the necessity of cultivating such an *inward temper of mind* as will form a complete *character*, which will lead to the observance of every particular duty, and make the constant practice of it easy and delightful.

They more especially recommend the universal principle of *brotherly love*, and a constant attention to the interests of

others. The second great commandment of the law, our Saviour says, is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" and in this, as the apostle Paul observes, the whole of the moral law, as far as it relates to society, is comprehended. Rom. xiii. 8—10: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Our Lord and the apostles, besides this general good-will to all men, strongly recommend a more affectionate concern for our fellow-christians, those who have the same faith, and the same hope with ourselves. John xv. 12: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." And, xiii. 35: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Accordingly, the apostle Peter exhorts, 1 Peter i. 22, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." The apostle John, more than any other, recommends this divine principle of brotherly love, and shews that it is impossible to love God without it. 1 John iv. 21: "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." Ver. 11, 12: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Ver. 16: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Ver. 20: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?"

Our Lord is particularly careful to warn his disciples, that they do not confine their attention to outward actions, but to consider the *inward temper of their mind*, with respect to every branch of social duty; and he censures the narrowness of the Pharisaical morality for its deficiency in this respect, upon several occasions, and especially in his sermon upon the mount. Matt. v. 21, 22: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment."

Ver. 27, 28 : " Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery : But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Very proper attention was also given to the temper of mind, and inclination of the heart, in the Old Testament ; an instance of which we have in the Tenth Commandment. Ex. xx. 17 : " Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

Far from confining our good-will and kind offices to our particular friends and fellow-christians, our Lord strongly recommends good-will and kindness to all persons, and even to enemies. Matt. v. 43—48 : " Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy ; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ?—Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." The apostle Paul also enjoins us, Rom. xii. 17, &c. to " recompense to no man evil for evil," and not to be " overcome of evil," but to " overcome evil with good."

The *forgiveness of injuries*, about which the Heathen moralists had, as we have seen, great doubts, and which some of them absolutely denied to be a duty, but which is certainly a most amiable and valuable one, is strongly recommended by our Lord and his apostles. Luke xvii. 3, 4 : " If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him ; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent ; thou shalt forgive him." He also particularly enforces this advice by the consideration of the Divine mercy and clemency. Matt. vi. 14, 15 : " If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Luke vi. 36 : " Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." To the same purpose the apostle Paul, Eph. iv. 31, 32 : " Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and

clamour and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in *Christ* hath forgiven you." See also Col. iii. 12, 13.

As a most important branch of Christian duty, and a proof of the most sincere brotherly love, we are frequently exhorted, in the Scriptures, to consult one another's improvement in virtue and goodness. Rom. xiv. 19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Heb. x. 24: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works."

It being our Lord's chief object to inspire just dispositions of mind, and right principles of action, which shall supersede all nice distinctions about particular rules of conduct, by leading us to *feel* properly upon every occasion, he gives us this one rule, which, in fact, comprehends all the duties of social life; Matt. vii. 12, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." An important example to this rule he also gives us with respect to candour in judging of one another; Matt. vii. 1, 2, "Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

It is not necessary to recite the precepts of Scripture which relate to the universally acknowledged duties of *justice* or *equity*, which are very full and explicit; but I shall observe, that the obligation of *compassion* and *charity*, which is variable in itself, and which might be disputed and evaded by subtle cavillers, is frequently insisted upon both in the Old and New Testament. Some of the passages in which this duty is inculcated, are peculiarly affecting. Deut. xv. 7, 8: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth." Lev. xix. 9, 10: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God." Isa. lviii.

6—12: “Is not this the fast that I have chosen—to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house: when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,” &c. Ps. xli. 1: “Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”

Our Saviour is far from being forgetful of a duty, which has so near a relation to that affectionate sympathy and brotherly love which enters so much into the spirit of his gospel. Upon occasion of the rich making feasts for the entertainment of others, as rich as themselves, he says, Luke xiv. 13, 14, “When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” The apostle James, whose whole epistle is a recommendation of good works, does not omit this duty. James ii. 15, 16: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body: what doth it profit?” And the apostle John, whose temper seems to have been peculiarly benevolent, says, 1 John iii. 17, “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”

The obligation of *veracity* seems to have been but weak in the Heathen world, and therefore the apostles are careful to caution their Christian converts very particularly on this head: Eph. iv. 25: “Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another:” iv. 15, “Speaking the truth in love.” Col. iii. 9: “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.”

Lastly, the most explicit rules are laid down for our conduct, with respect to the various *relative duties of life*, as those of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, magistrate and subject, minister and people; recommending, in general, to superiors, a regard to equity, and an affectionate attention to the interest of those who are under their power; and to inferiors, a reasonable submission, and a faithful attachment to those to whom they are subject;

but a detail of all the particulars is not necessary in this place. See 1 Pet. ii. 13, to the end; iii. 1—7. Eph. v. 22, to the end; vi. 1—9. Col. iii. 18, to the end; iv. 1. &c.

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Duties which respect ourselves.*

WHEREAS very little account was made by the Heathens of the duties of temperance and chastity, and in general of those duties which respect a man's government of himself, in cases where others are not immediately concerned, we find that these duties make a considerable figure in the system of the revealed will of God, and that the utmost *purity of heart*, as well as of life and conversation, is required of us in these respects. More especially, as the Gentile converts had not been used to put any restraint upon their private passions, from a principle of conscience, the apostles, in writing to them, are particularly careful to enforce a regard to these virtues.

“Blessed,” says our Saviour, Matt. v. 8, “are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” The apostle Paul cautions Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 22, to “flee youthful lusts;” and to keep himself pure, 1 Tim. v. 22. To the same purpose the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” And Paul to the Ephesians, Eph. v. 3, 4: “Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.” And, lastly, he gives the Corinthians a most solemn warning, concerning the extreme danger of an addictedness to these, as well as other vices; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,—nor covetous, nor drunkards,—shall inherit the kingdom of God.” And, whatever some modern libertines may plead in favour of what they call *gallantry*, the apostle peremptorily says, Heb. xiii. 4, that “Whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge.” Nor is this doctrine, as some have pretended, peculiar to the apostles, as if they had made the doctrines of the gospel more rigorous than their Master; for our Lord himself enumerates *fornication* along with *murders*, *adulteries*, *thefts*, *false witness* and *blasphemies*, which come from the heart, and defile the man. Matt. xv. 19.

Every other irregularity of passion, besides the irregular indulgence of the bodily appetites, is also expressly forbidden in the Scriptures, and a variety of virtues, dispositions, and habits, which have their seat more properly in the *mind*, are strongly inculcated upon us, as *humility, meekness, contentment* and *diligence*.

Admonitions respecting *pride*, or too high an opinion of ourselves, and the consequence of it, arrogance with respect to others, are very frequent both in the Old and New Testament. To assist us to repress this improper disposition of mind, which is the source of so much uneasiness, both to ourselves and others, we are more especially reminded, that every advantage of which we can be possessed, and which can be the foundation of pride, as birth, riches, power, knowledge, &c. is the gift of God, and therefore should be enjoyed with gratitude, humility and usefulness.

Moses admonishes the Israelites on this subject, Deut. viii. 11—17, “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and thine heart be lifted up;—and thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth.”

Our Saviour took every opportunity of inculcating this useful lesson on his disciples. He began his sermon on the mount with pronouncing a blessing upon the “poor in spirit;” Matt. v. 3. He frequently reproved the pride of the Scribes and Pharisees; Matt. xxiii. 2—6: and recommended humility and moderation to his apostles, upon several occasions, and more especially when they disputed among themselves who should be the greatest in his kingdom; and he sets before them his own example in this respect, Matt. xi. 29, “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

The apostles give many excellent advices on this subject: as Rom. xii. 3, “I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” The same apostle argues this matter more particularly in 1 Cor. iv. 6, 7, “That no one of you be puffed up one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another; and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory

as if thou hadst not received it?" He repeats the same exhortation, 1 Tim. vi. 17—19, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." The apostle James also gives us this general maxim to the same purpose: James iv. 6, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Hasty and unreasonable resentment is also the subject of frequent caution and advices in the books of Scripture. Solomon says, Prov. xvi. 32, and xxv. 28, "He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." David says, Ps. xxxvii. 8, "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Our Lord pronounces a blessing upon the *meek*, Matt. v. 5; and he represents being *angry without cause* as a thing of a very criminal nature. The apostle Paul exhorts, Philip. iv. 5, "that our moderation," in this respect, "be known unto all men," because "the Lord is at hand:" and lastly, *peaceableness*, *gentleness* and *meekness*, are enumerated by St. Paul among the *fruits of the spirit*, while *hatred*, *wrath* and *strife*, are reckoned among the fruits of the flesh." Gal. v. 20.

With respect to the things of this world, and our condition in it, *industry*, but without *anxiety*, is every where recommended to us. More especially, idleness is often finely exposed, and diligence praised in the book of Proverbs, ch. vi. 6, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise." xviii. 9, "He also that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster." vi. 9—11, "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." The apostle Paul, among other advices to the Christian converts, exhorts them, Rom. xii. 10, not to be slothful in business; and he himself was an example of industry, working with his own hands, at his trade of a tent-maker, rather than be burthensome to the Corinthians, with whom he resided.

On the other hand, we are perhaps more frequently cautioned against excessive *anxiety* about the things of this life; and mankind in general, perhaps, suffer more in consequence of it. Envy, which takes its rise from anxiety, is particularly forbidden in the tenth commandment. Solomon says, Prov. xxviii. 20, that "he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent;" and Agur is represented as making this excellent prayer, Prov. xxx. 8, 9, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Our Lord advises his disciples, Luke xii. 15, to "take heed and beware of covetousness:" for that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." And again, xxi. 34, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life;" and he advises us to lay up "treasure in heaven," rather than "upon earth:" Matt. vi. 19, 20. The apostle Paul has many earnest exhortations upon this subject. Heb. xiii. 5: "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have." 1 Tim. vi. 6—10: "Godliness with contentment is great gain: For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil," &c. Lastly, he gives a beautiful description of the temper of his own mind in this respect. Philip. iv. 11, 12: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

It may seem extraordinary to some persons, that nothing should be said in the Scriptures about the criminality of what we usually call *self-murder*; but since all those *wrong dispositions of mind*, which lead to it, are sufficiently censured, there was no great reason for noticing this particular action, which takes its rise and its character from them.

The voluntary death of Achitophel, and indeed of Sampson, in the Old Testament, and that of Judas Iscariot, in

the New, are mentioned in the course of the history, together with the circumstances which led to them, but without any particular censure ; and Sampson was even assisted supernaturally to put an end to his own life, together with that of his enemies.

Josephus, in the speech which he made to dissuade his countrymen from laying violent hands upon themselves, (which great numbers of the Jews about that time did,) makes not use of one argument drawn from the Scriptures, but only from reason, or the principles of the Heathen philosophy ; speaking of the separate state of the soul, of transmigration, and of Tartarus.\*

It seems to be sufficient to say, that there is no example in the Scriptures of any person of distinguished virtue putting an end to his own life, and that a voluntary death is never mentioned with approbation ; and the most eminent personages, especially Jesus Christ, are recorded to have borne pain and torture to the last, without ever thinking of relieving themselves by a voluntary death. We also know that none of the apostles, or primitive Christians, ever took this method to avoid torture, even when they could have no hope of life ; and we cannot but feel that we should have thought meanly of them if they had done so, thinking such a degree of impatience and cowardice, as that conduct would have argued, a considerable flaw in their characters.

I do not see much force in the argument against a voluntary death, from the consideration of life being the *gift of God*, and a *trust*, which we ought not to resign without his orders, because every blessing of life comes under the same description, and yet many of these we think ourselves sufficiently authorized to relinquish, according to our own prudence and discretion. But to throw away *life* is, in another view, a very different thing from relinquishing wealth, rank, or ease, &c., for it is putting an end to the whole period of trial and discipline, and throwing away the opportunity which adversity, as a part of it, might afford, to improve us, and fit us for something greater hereafter ; and, with respect to other persons, there certainly is not a nobler, or more improving spectacle in the world, than that of a good man struggling with undeserved sufferings, without a complaint.

But though, on these accounts, I should, in all cases, con-

\* *De Bello Judaico*, L. III. C. 8. S. 5. P. Though Josephus, according to his speech in *Whiston*, "began to talk like a philosopher to them," yet he reprobated *self-murder*, as "an instance of impiety against God our Creator," an argument very imperfectly supplied by the *Heathen philosophy*.

demn a man for withdrawing himself from the public theatre of life, I would not bring this action under the denomination of *murder*, because they are by no means things of the same nature ; for certainly, the temper of mind with which a man destroys himself, and that with which he kills another, are very different ; and the latter is much more malignant, and deserving of punishment, than the former. *Despair*, or *fear*, are reprehensible: but *malice* is certainly of a much more atrocious nature.

Neither can there be any thing peculiarly hazardous in suicide, considered as the *last* crime of which a man is guilty, and of which he has no opportunity of repenting, because it is not any single action, the first, the middle, or the last of a man's life, that ought, in equity, to determine his character in a future state, but the *whole of his character and conduct*, taken together.

## SECTION IV.

### *Of the Means of Virtue.*

THE sacred writings not only contain the most powerful dissuatives from all kinds of vice, and the most effectual exhortations to a life of universal virtue, but likewise a variety of observations and advices relating to the manner in which vicious, or virtuous habits, are formed, and the methods by which inordinate affections may be repressed, and proper ones promoted.

For this purpose, they propose constant watchfulness, frequent meditation on the works and word of God, a careful choice of good company, and great resolution and self-denial, whenever bad habits are become predominant. They, moreover, advise all persons to watch over one another, and to do every thing to mutual edification.

David says, Ps. cxli. 3, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips." Our Lord advises his disciples, Matt. xxvi. 41, "To watch and pray," that they "enter not into temptation;" and Mark iv. 18—24, "To take heed," lest when they "hear the word,—the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things, entering in, choke the word, and make it become unfruitful:" and he charges the church at Sardis, Rev. iii. 2, to "be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die." Exhortations of a similar nature abound in the apostolical writings.

More especially are the *books of Scripture* recommended

to our use, as containing the best instructions for a good life; and being a history of the Divine proceedings, respecting the human race, they necessarily exhibit such views as cannot but make an impression, in the highest degree favourable to virtue. Moses repeatedly charges the Israelites to read and meditate upon his laws and writings. Deut. vi. 6, 7, "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The same injunction he repeats, Deut. xi. 18. The kings of Israel were moreover required to write out a copy of the law with their own hands, Deut. xvii. 18—20, "And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them," &c. David says of a good man, Ps. i. 2, That "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night;" and, Ps. xxxvii. 31, "The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Lastly, the apostle Paul commends the parents of Timothy, and mentions it is a great advantage to him, 2 Tim. iii. 15, "that from a child" he had "known the Holy Scriptures, which," he says, were "able to make" him "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Concerning the same Scriptures, he adds, ver. 16, 17, that they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Solomon repeatedly admonishes young persons concerning the danger of *bad company*. Prov. i. 10: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;" ver. 15, "Walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path." And he observes in general, Prov. xiii. 20, that, "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but" that "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." The apostle Paul also cautions the Corinthians on this head, when he says, 1 Cor. xv. 33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners."

The practice of our duty is, in general, represented in the Scriptures as *pleasant* and *easy*, when we are accustomed to

it. Thus Solomon says of wisdom, Prov. iii. 17, that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace:" and David says, Ps. cxix. 165, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." Our Saviour also says, Matt. xi. 29, 30, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

But, notwithstanding this, we are warned, agreeable to what reason and nature would apprise us of, that before vicious habits are subdued, and virtuous ones formed, great exertions of courage and resolution will be necessary; and the difficulty, in this case, is by no means concealed by the writers of the Old and New Testament, especially the latter, who generally wrote in times of persecution. Their writings, accordingly, abound with exhortations to exert proportionable courage and fortitude.

Our Lord expresses the difficulty of conquering a propensity to certain vices, by a very strong figure, when he says, Matt. v. 29, 30, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee," &c. He also gives us an idea of the great hardships which may attend the profession of Christianity, when he says, Luke ix. 23, 24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me," &c. Accordingly, we are exhorted by the apostle Paul, Col. iii. 5, to "mortify" our "members which are upon the earth;" and, Rom. xii. 2, not to be "conformed to this world," but to be "transformed by the renewing" of our "mind." We shall find, however, that the Scriptures propose to us rewards and encouragements, abundantly adequate to the labour and difficulties of which they apprise us.

Lastly, we are most earnestly exhorted to watch over one another, and to promote our mutual edification by every proper means. Moses says, Lev. xix. 17, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." The book of Proverbs contains excellent observations concerning the benefit of instruction and reproof. Prov. xxviii. 23: "He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue;" and David says, Ps. cxli. 5, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews enjoins, Heb. iii. 13, that we "exhort one another daily while it is called, To-day;" lest any of us

“be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” We are, in many places, cautioned to *give no offence*; that is, to cause none to offend, by any improper liberty of ours. The apostle Paul enlarges much upon this subject, 1 Cor. x. 23—33. Lastly, the apostle James speaks in the highest terms of the man who contributes to the spiritual benefit of another. James v. 19, 20: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him: Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

## SECTION V.

### *General Remarks concerning Morality.*

I SHALL close this account of *the morality of the Bible*, with some observations of a more general nature.

It is unquestionably a just maxim in itself, and a clear doctrine of the Scriptures, that no *partial obedience* to the law of God will be accepted, instead of *universal obedience*, which is absolutely required of us. A just respect to the authority of God, as our sovereign lawgiver, and judge, will certainly lead us, as it did the Psalmist, Ps. cxix. 6, to “have respect to all its commandments,” and not to admit of some, and refuse others, as we shall judge it reasonable and expedient; or, which is generally the same thing, as we shall find it *convenient* to us. Such a conduct would not be excused by any earthly sovereign, master, or parent; nor can it be expected to be so by the supreme Lord and Judge of all.

The apostle James argues this case more particularly. James ii. 10, 11: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”

We are by no means, however, to infer from this, that all crimes and neglects are equal, and will be punished with equal severity; for it is the doctrine of the Scriptures, as well as of reason, that there is a difference in offences; and some are spoken of with much more indignation than others, in the same manner, as more stress is laid upon some virtues than others. Undoubtedly, therefore, a difference will be made between even wilful offences of any kind, and universal profligacy of character and conduct. If a

state of perfectly exact retribution be naturally impossible, we may, however, conclude, that in the future life there will be a near approach to it, and that the proper *reward of Christians* will be assigned to those only who sincerely endeavour to do the whole will of God, without distinction or reserve.

For the same reason no bounds are set to our attainments in virtue, but we are required to aim at the highest degrees of perfection, to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" 2 Cor. vii. 1: to "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God;" Col. iv. 12: to "abstain from all appearance of evil," 1 Thess. v. 22; and to propose to ourselves the imitation of the all-perfect God himself. This was expressly inculcated by our Saviour, Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" by the apostle Paul, Eph. v. 1, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;" and the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. i. 15, 16, "As he which hath called you is holy; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy," referring to Lev. xix. 2. xx. 7. xxi. 8.

These precepts appear, at first view, to be very strict, and considering the imperfections of human nature, to be unreasonably severe: but considering that, in all cases, sufficient allowance is made for every natural defect, for whatever is consistent with a sincere endeavour to do the whole will of God, there is the greatest wisdom and propriety in these exhortations.

Had any particular pitch of virtue been defined, upon our arrival at which we had been encouraged to be satisfied with ourselves, without attempting any thing farther; many persons, abounding in conceit and presumption only, would soon have arrogated to themselves that character, and have been dupes to the most fatal delusion and self-deceit. We even see that absolute perfection has been pretended to by many.

Besides, since moral character is a thing which, in its own nature, admits of no precise boundary, but advances, by insensible degrees, from the most extreme profligacy to such purity and excellence as only the Divine Being himself is capable of; and since it is essential to a genuine good disposition to wish the attainment of the greatest degrees of excellence, there would have been an impropriety in moral precepts of any other kind. The man whose

chief study it is to recommend himself to God, by a conformity to his whole will, cannot but be sensible that whatever his attainments are, or may be, there will still be something more that he *might*, and *ought* to have done; his moral discernment being improved by the greater attention which he will continually give to his character and conduct.

Indeed, this is the case with all inferior arts of various kinds, as well as this great *art of life*. What poet or painter ever thought his piece absolutely faultless and perfect, with whatever admiration it might be considered by others: and could he remove all the blemishes he now sees in it, he would still, by more attention to it, discover more. Now, for the same reason, this must necessarily be the case with every man whose object is to excel in virtue, and who studies propriety and perfection of moral character.

The apostle Paul discovers this just discernment in his own case, Philip. iii. 13—15: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” He, and other apostles, give many excellent precepts to this purpose, to those Christians to whom they wrote. 2 Pet. i. 5—8: “And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is agreeable to the same general maxim, that *perseverance till death* is absolutely required of all who expect the rewards of the gospel; and a backslider at any period is always represented as even in a worse condition than one who had never known the right way, since the knowledge he had of the excellence of it ought to have been an additional motive with him to continue in it.

To this purpose the Divine Being addresses the children of Israel by Ezekiel, ch. xviii. 24: “When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass

that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." It is also our Saviour's doctrine, John viii. 31, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." The aggravation of apostacy is particularly pointed out by the apostle Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21: "If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning: for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

On this account the apostles urge their fellow-christians to constancy in the profession of the gospel, viz. lest they should lose their reward, and enhance their future condemnation. Gal. vi. 9: "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." 2 John 8: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

It was the great maxim of the Heathen philosophers of old, as it is with almost all those who reject Christianity at present, to *think with the wise, and act with the vulgar*; but a perfect consistency of character and profession is strictly required of Christians. In time of persecution we are allowed, and even commanded, to endeavour to avoid it, by all fair and honest methods; so that if we be persecuted in one city, we may flee to another; but on no consideration whatever are we to *make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience*, by denying or concealing our Christian profession. With respect to this great hour of trial, the declarations of our Lord are most express and solemn.

Having foretold his own sufferings, and severely rebuked Peter, who could not bear the thought of them, we are told, Mark viii. 34, 35, that "When he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me: for whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Matt. x. 32, 33: "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

These admonitions the apostles keep in mind in their

writings, and therefore the apostle Paul says, 2 Tim. ii. 12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." And, acting upon this maxim, thousands of Christians have cheerfully laid down their lives for the profession of the Christian faith.

It is to be observed, that, in the Scriptures, though the rewards of virtue are only promised to persons of a truly virtuous character and conduct, they are promised to those who shall so repent of their sins, as to manifest a change of character and conduct at any time of the active part of their lives. No person, however, has any encouragement, from any part of Scripture, to expect that he shall be entitled to the rewards of the gospel, who repents so late, that he has no opportunity of shewing a change of conduct at all.

Besides, few of those late professions of repentance are sincere, or, if sincere, would have been lasting; and, according to the uniform language of the Scriptures, it is according to the deeds that men have actually done in this life, that they shall receive at the hand of God hereafter: 2 Cor. v. 10, 11; "for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

It is alleged, indeed, that our Saviour promised the thief upon the cross, that he should be with him in paradise; but nothing can be inferred from a case so very obscure as this is: for we know nothing of the previous character of this man, we can guess but very imperfectly at what is meant by his request, nor do we know precisely the full import of what our Lord did promise him. Besides, this story is only found in *one* of the evangelists, viz. Luke, who appears, by many circumstances, to have been the least informed of any of them; and Matthew, who was upon the spot, says, that *both the thieves* reviled Christ, without adding one word in favour of either of them.\* As, therefore, there is no

\* "Both these evangelists [Matthew and Mark] agree, that they, both the thieves, that were crucified with him, reviled him. St. Luke is commonly taken for the penman of St. Paul, by whom this gospel is believed to have been dictated. But neither of these are taken to have been eye-witnesses, or that they were by, and present at this fact. St. Mark is taken to write from the mouth of St. Peter, although it might possibly be from the apostle St. Barnabas, either of which apostles were likely to be eye-witnesses of the fact; and there is an old rule, that one eye-witness is better than two ear-witnesses of any fact. We conclude, then, that here are two witnesses against one, and that one but an ear-witness of that fact; and therefore there is a ground to question the very truth of Luke's relation, seeing he wrote but by relation, and what he says stands not of itself, and can with great difficulty be

other fact in the history of the Old or New Testament, that gives any countenance to expectations of mercy in a proper *death-bed repentance*, and all the general rules and precepts of the Scripture absolutely exclude all hope in this case, it must be very dangerous to rely upon it; though it is to be feared that many persons continue to live in a manner which their conscience disapproves, in consequence of deluding themselves with this miserable fallacy.

I shall conclude this account of the morality of the Scriptures with observing, that it is not delivered systematically, and at large, either in the Old or New Testament; but that it is not on this account the *less*, but, in fact, the *more valuable*, because it is delivered in a manner that is both more *intelligible* and more *forcible*: for, being delivered as particular occasions suggest, it has necessarily the advantage of a peculiar emphasis and energy. What precept, for instance, against pride or hypocrisy, in a general system of morals, would have had the force of our Lord's vehement reflections upon the Scribes and Pharisees, and of his affectionate admonitions to his own disciples on those subjects; or what other manner of instruction would have recommended a great variety of amiable virtues so much as our Lord's method of inculcating them by *example* and pertinent *parables*?

Besides, what men really want, is not so much to know what is their duty, as proper views and motives to induce them to practise it. It is, therefore, in general, very properly taken for granted, in the Scriptures, that men know what it is that God requires of them; and almost all the admonitions to virtue go upon that supposition, enforcing the practice of what is acknowledged to be right, by motives adapted to peculiar situations and circumstances.

## SECTION VI.

### *Of Positive Institutions.*

BESIDE the duties of strictly *moral obligation*, on the observance of which our moral character and happiness chiefly depend; we find, in revelation, that the Divine Being has

made to stand in agreement with what the other two evangelists have delivered." Layton. *Search after Souls*. 1691. Pp. 208, 209. The difficulty of harmonizing Matthew and Mark with Luke in their accounts of this transaction may be seen in Doddridge, Sect. 190, Note (h). *Le Clerc*, also, will not allow that Luke, though he gives an account more exact and at large, really varies from the two other evangelists. "S. Luc étant le plus exact, en cet endroit, dit quelque chose de plus que les deux autres evangelistes, mais il ne les contredit pas." *Le Nouv. Test.* Amst. 1702. P. 256. Note.

been pleased to enjoin several observances, which are not in themselves of a moral nature, but which ultimately tend to promote good morals, and that just state of mind, which makes the practice of our duty in other respects easy to us. These are, the observance of one day in seven for the purpose of rest from labour, which is obligatory on all mankind;\* the observance of a large ritual of ceremonies by the Jews; and of baptism and the Lord's supper by the Christians. Of each of these, in the order in which I have now mentioned them, I shall give a general account, with a view to explain the nature and use of them.

### § 1. *Of the Observance of the Sabbath.*

WE are expressly told, in the books of Moses, that the observance of the *sabbath*, or of rest from labour every seventh day, was appointed in commemoration of the day on which God rested from the creation of the heavens and the earth, which was completed in six days. This injunction being laid upon Adam,† necessarily affects all his posterity. Gen. ii. 2: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made: and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." But we have a more particular account of the rest to be observed on this day, in the fourth commandment, Exod. xx. 8—11: "Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for, in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it."

Besides this reason for keeping the sabbath, which equally affects all mankind, we sometimes find other arguments

\* If "the transaction in the wilderness, Exod. xvi. was the first actual institution of the Sabbath," as Dr. Paley argues, and Dr. Fleming and others before him, this rest enjoined on the Israelites could not thus become *obligatory on all mankind*. Its observance would rather depend on civil regulations, and a sense of its moral or religious expedience.

† The Author does not appear to have retained this opinion. He considers the *Sabbath* only as a *Jewish Rite*, in Theol. Rep. VI. 465, and in his *Notes*, Exod. xvi. 25.

insisted upon, which respect the Jews only; as, Deut. v. 15, "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day." It appears, from these passages, that the proper purpose of the sabbath is *rest from bodily labour*. But, on this account, it is also peculiarly seasonable for serious reflection of mind and devout meditation on the works of God; and by this means it is exceedingly useful for correcting the unfavourable influence which a close and uninterrupted attention to the business of this life naturally has upon our minds; impressing us with just sentiments, and thereby preparing us for good conduct in life. Accordingly, we find in the Old, but more especially in the New Testament, that this use was made of the sabbath both by the Jews and Christians, there being stated assemblies on this day for reading the Scriptures and public prayer.

The sabbath was also distinguished under the law of Moses by an additional sacrifice of two lambs, besides the daily burnt-offering, Numb. xxviii. 9. And the ninety-second Psalm being intitled, "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day," was probably composed, in order to be sung in the temple-service of that day.

As we find, 2 Kings iv. 23, that it was customary with the Jews of old to resort to their prophets on the sabbath-day, and also on the new moons, it is not improbable but that the prophets, and other persons learned in their law, were used to explain it on those days to the people. Where no such persons were at hand, it is probable that masters of private families read the Scriptures in their own houses; or several families might join, and assemble together for the purpose, and this might give occasion to the institution of *synagogues*, which answered the same end. These assemblies were in universal use in our Saviour's time, and had been so, as is generally agreed, from the time of Ezra, if they were not as old as the time of King David, who is thought to allude to them in some of his Psalms.

Christ having risen from the dead on the first day of the week, which is distinguished by the appellation of *the Lord's day*, and having afterwards appeared to his disciples on that day, in preference to any other, it seems from thence to have grown into a custom, with the apostles and primitive Christians, to assemble for public worship on that day, rather than on the seventh; and though the Christian Jews pro-

bably continued for some time to meet on the seventh day also, yet, by degrees, the observance of that day for the purpose of public worship grew out of use.\*

Our present practice was certainly that of the earliest Christians, whose customs we are able to trace; and there having never been any controversy upon the subject, we may safely conclude, that they derived it from the apostles, and their authority is sufficient for us. Nor does it make any material difference whether we be certified of their practice by their own writings, or any other sufficient evidence. In fact, it does not seem to be very material what particular day of the week we set apart for rest and public worship, provided we conscientiously appropriate the same portion of our time to that use.

That some portion of time should be set apart for the purpose of public worship, seems to be highly reasonable of itself, exclusive of all express authority; since societies, as such, depend upon God, as well as the individuals that compose them; and therefore they owe him the same homage; and it is most natural, that public thanksgivings, confessions and petitions should be made by as many of the society as can conveniently assemble for that purpose. Every person, therefore, who considers himself as a member of society, and having a common interest with it, should, on this account, attend the public worship of God; and what time is so convenient for this purpose, as the day of rest from labour and worldly business? The mind will naturally be most composed, and, on every account, the fittest for religious exercises on that day; and the devotion of individuals is greatly strengthened by the example of others joining with them.

It is an additional argument in favour of public worship, that the custom promotes society and friendship, by affording frequent opportunities for the people of a neighbourhood meeting and seeing one another, especially as the business of the day tends to promote mutual love, and all the social virtues.

The Sabbath, among the Jews, (and for the same reason, it should apply to the Lord's day among the Christians,) is

\* There have been a few Christian congregations in modern times, chiefly, if not solely, among the *Baptists*, who kept a seventh-day *Sabbath*. Dr. Fleming published, in 1736, "The Fourth Commandment abrogated by the Gospel," &c. in opposition to "Two Tracts, viz. Mr. *Cornthwaite's* Reflections on Dr. *Wright's* Treatise on the Lord's Day," and one published in the year 1735, called "The Seventh Day of the Week the Christian Sabbath."

expressly ordered to be a day of rest for the *cattle*, as well as for man. It must be exceedingly wrong, therefore, to make the labouring cattle work on that day; and in this view it is a most reasonable and merciful institution.

As the most important use of a weekly day of rest, (on which the attention of the mind is withdrawn from the usual cares of life,) is serious and useful reflection, in order to the moral culture of the mind, it must be wrong, as evidently interfering with this end of the institution, to give way to excessive levity, and especially to use noisy and riotous diversions on that day; though a cheerful, rather than an austere manner of spending it, is favourable to its proper use. Our Saviour was far from approving of the rigorous and superstitious manner in which the Pharisees spent their Sabbath, and we cannot think that more gloom and rigour becomes the Christian than the Jewish institution. Since all positive ordinances are in their own nature subordinate to duties of moral obligation, it is evident, that the rest of the Sabbath should give place to labour, when acts of justice, benevolence and mercy, must otherwise be neglected.\*

## § 2. *Of Sacrifices.*

BEFORE I proceed any farther in my account of those Scripture precepts, which are not properly of a moral nature, but are subservient to moral purposes, I shall treat briefly of *sacrifices*. Of the *origin* of sacrifices, consisting either of the presentation of fruits, or the killing and burning of animals, we have no account; but we find that they were permitted, and even expressly appointed by God, on a great variety of occasions.

If, as it is possible, sacrifices were not originally of Divine appointment, we may suppose, that the natural foundation, or original of them, was the same, in general, with that of prayer, viz. a method which mankind thought of, to express the sense they had of their gratitude and obligation to God for the gifts and protection of his providence, and to procure

\* See Mr. Evanson's papers, signed *Eubulus*, in the Theol. Repos. V. p. 342, & VI. p. 252, [352,] and those of his opponents, VI. pp. 22, 113, 331 & 465. In 1792 Mr. E. republished the whole controversy, with his reply to Dr. Priestley, under the title of "Arguments against and for the Sabbatical Observance of Sunday." On the Sabbath and Lord's Day, see Mede's *Discourses*, XV. Works, p. 55. See also *Calvini Institut.* L. ii. Cap. VIII. S. 31—34. That Reformer's notions respecting the observation of *Sunday*, were far more liberal than the regulations of the Presby-

farther favours from him; and no kind of action was so proper for this purpose as the devoting to him some part of their substance, and especially such articles as contributed to their daily support.

It is to this day a custom throughout the East, never to approach any superior, or patron, without a present. And, in this case, the value of the present is not so much considered, as its being a token of respect and homage. Thus we read, that when a Persian peasant was surprised by the approach of his prince, so that he had nothing at hand to present him with, he ran and fetched a handful of water from a neighbouring brook, rather than accost him without any offering. It is probable, that, in conformity to these general ideas, which are still prevalent in the East, the Israelites were forbidden *to appear before the Lord empty*.

When mankind thought of giving any thing to God, they would, probably, at first, only leave it in some open place, and abstain from making any farther use of it themselves; but afterwards, observing many things wasted away, or consumed by the heat of the sun, which is the great visible agent of God in this world, and other things suddenly consumed by lightning, which was always considered as more immediately sent by God; they might naturally enough fall into the notion, that *consumption by fire*, was the manner in which God took things. They might, therefore, imagine, that burning things, at the same time that it most effectually alienated them from the use of man, would likewise be the most proper, and the most decent method of devoting them

terians in Scotland, or of the English Calvinists. By the following passages it appears that he laid little stress upon the supposed appointment of a *seventh* portion of time, and was not unprepared to have adopted the *Decades* of his countrymen, that he censured some Christians, for inculcating the severity of a Jewish *Sabbath*, and that instead of regarding *Sunday* as sacred, by Divine institution, he described it as an expedient necessary to secure the regular recurrence of public worship and instruction. "Neque sic tamen septenarium numerum moror, ut ejus servituti ecclesias astringam, neque enim damnavero, quæ alios conventibus suis, solennes dies habeant, modo à superstitione absint.—Manet nobis etiamnum par mysterii, in diebus, significatio quæ apud Judæos locum habebat. Et sanè videmus quid tali doctrina profecerint. Qui enim eorum constitutionibus hærent, crassa, carnalique sabbatismi superstitione Judæos ter superant.—Cæterum generalis doctrina præcipuè tenenda est; ne religio inter nos vel concidat, vel languescat, diligenter colendos esse sacros cœtus, et externis subsidiis quæ ad fovendum Dei cultum valeant operam dandam esse." S. 34. In 1618, when John Hales attended the Synod of Dort, the Deputies from Geneva reported "that in the churches in their cities they had, every Sunday, four sermons." *Golden Remains*, p. 373. Mr. James Peirce thus complains of Calvin, in his Letter to Dr. Snape: "I will here mention one opinion of his, which 'tis well known has been always disagreeable to us; and that is concerning the Lord's Day. You never knew any of us profess an approbation of his doctrine in this respect, or the practice of the Church of Geneva, which is founded thereon." *The Dissenter's Reasons*, &c. 1718, p. 30.

to God ; especially, as nothing was left to putrify, and become offensive after burning ; and in some cases, as in the burning of incense, little or nothing would remain afterwards.

Considering the very low conceptions which mankind in early ages had of God, we do not wonder to find that they considered him as, in some manner, partaking with them of their sacrifices ; and, therefore, that they considered them more especially as an expression of *reconciliation and friendship* ; which idea is naturally, and especially in the East, connected with that of eating and drinking together, and particularly eating the same salt. In this view it is observable, that no sacrifice among the Jews was to be made without this ingredient.

This account of sacrifices, is, in some measure, illustrated and confirmed by the history of the Greeks and Romans, whose sacrifices, originally, consisted of such things only as were their customary food. Thus, it is acknowledged, that all their sacrifices were at first *bloodless*, consisting of vegetables only ; and that this practice continued till they themselves procured a sufficiency of animal food, upon which they began to sacrifice animals. The Greeks also expressly speak of *temples* as the houses of their gods, of *altars* as their tables, and of *priests* as their servants.

The same general ideas we find among the Jews ; and the Divine Being plainly alludes to them when he is represented as saying, Psalm l. 13, “ Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats ? ” Which reproof was not intended to censure or change the general idea which they had annexed to sacrifices, (as a transferring of their substance from themselves to God,) but to restrain the very gross ideas which some of them might have entertained in pursuance of it, to prevent their laying too much stress upon these ceremonies, and to remind them of the greater importance of things of a moral nature, as being infinitely more pleasing to God.

There was not, originally, any particular order of men employed in the business of sacrifices, but every man sacrificed, as well as prayed, in person, being priest as well as king in his own family ; and in those primitive patriarchal times, it does not appear that any part of a sacrifice was eaten by the offerer, but that the whole was devoted to God, and entirely consumed with fire. But when, under the Mosaic dispensation, a particular order of men was appointed for the purpose, they were considered

as the more immediate *servants of God*; and there being a manifest propriety, that servants should be fed from their master's table, these priests were allowed a certain share in most sacrifices. Such, at least, is the opinion of the Jewish Rabbies with respect to the custom of sacrificing before and under the law.

Sacrifices, being of the nature of a *gift*, presented as a token of respect or homage, they naturally accompanied every solemn address to the Divine Being, as the most decent and proper ceremonial in approaching him; and being likewise considered as a *convivial entertainment*, at which the Divine Being himself was present, there was a peculiar propriety in their accompanying petitions for the pardon of sin, as expressive of reconciliation and friendship. At the same time, the sacrifices being provided at the expense of the offending party, they indirectly answered the purpose of *mulcts*, or fines for offences.

Though I have said, that it is possible that mankind might of themselves have had recourse to sacrifices, as a method of expressing their dependence upon God, &c. yet, when we consider how improbable it is, that mankind should even have attained to any tolerable and useful knowledge of God himself, without some particular instruction, at least for a long space of time; it is most natural to suppose, that when the Divine Being communicated that most important knowledge to the first race of men, he also instructed them in those methods by which he chose that they should express their homage, gratitude and obedience. But whether we suppose sacrifices to have been of human, or Divine origin, it makes no difference with respect to the general idea of their nature and use.\*

### § 3. *Of the Jewish Ritual.*

BESIDES the precepts and observances which it has pleased the Divine Being to enjoin with respect to the whole human race, he provided what we may call a much stricter, and more severe discipline for the Hebrew nation, whom he distinguished by frequent revelations of his will, by many interpositions in their favour, and a peculiar con-

\* See "An Essay on the Nature, Design and Origin of Sacrifices." 1748. By Dr. Sykes, or an account of that work in Dr. Disney's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Author.* 1785. Pp. 286—301.

stitution of civil government, in which he himself more immediately presided.

They were restricted in their diet, being confined to the use of certain kinds of food ; but they were such as are now generally esteemed to be the most innocent in their nature, mild in their qualities, and least apt to become satiating by frequent use. They would therefore tend to impress upon the minds of those who were confined to them an idea of their obligation to greater purity and innocence, and make them consider themselves as a *holy nation*, peculiarly devoted to God. The use of such food would also, of itself, probably, incline them to a peaceful, inoffensive life, as it is thought that the ranker kinds of food tend to make mankind fierce and cruel.

A great part of the ritual of the Hebrews seems to have been intended to preserve upon their minds a sense of their immediate relation to God, and of their obligation to a constant intercourse with him. There was one particular place within their country, to which they were to resort, where the Divine Being was to be consulted by them, and where he manifested himself in a more especial manner. In this place, which was first a moveable tabernacle, and afterwards the temple at Jerusalem, he had a constant habitation, keeping, as it were, a regular court, with suitable attendants. Here he received their gifts and homage, and here he gave them instructions and advice on a variety of occasions, when they applied to him in a proper manner.

More especially, the great object of the Hebrew ritual seems to have been to inspire the minds of that people with an abhorrence of the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, and to preserve among them the pure worship of the one only living and true God. For this reason many of their rites were the very reverse of those of their neighbours, so as to be altogether incompatible with them, and must consequently have tended to make them averse to them.\* Upon every occasion the importance of their adherence to this precise mode of worship was strongly inculcated upon them: a particular and remarkable providence attended them through the whole course of their history (and still attends them), giving them prosperity and success while they were obedient, and making the hand of God visible in

\* "The Jews were commanded to sacrifice those creatures which the idolaters had in the greatest veneration." See Young. *Idol. Cor. I. Ch. v. p. 184.*

their punishment, when they departed from his worship, and relapsed into idolatry, or when they became, in other respects, profligate and wicked.

To prevent, as far as possible, the abuse and corruption of this religion, nothing of the least consequence was left to the discretion of the people, but every minute particular, as those relating to the structure of the tabernacle, and the building of the temple, the kinds of sacrifices, the ceremonies attending them, and every thing that was to be done on their public festivals, was rigidly prescribed to them, and they were not allowed to make the least deviation. For the same purpose, and also to preserve a proper degree of union among a people who were originally to have had no temporal head, they were allowed to have but one altar, and no sacrifice was to be made but at that one place, and by certain persons appointed for that purpose; and three times every year, viz. at their public festivals, every male was to make his appearance before the Lord, at the place of his residence, in the tabernacle or temple.

Several things in the Hebrew ritual were perhaps intended to serve as types of Christ, or to bear some resemblance to him and his religion, and therefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls them "a shadow of good things to come;" Heb. x. 1.\*

On the other hand, it may be observed, that the author of this epistle perhaps only intended to draw a comparison between the Hebrew ritual, and such particulars in the Christian system as most nearly resemble it, only as other comparisons and figures are used, merely for illustration,

\* The Author's papers in the Theol. Repos. treat this question more at large. The writer mentioned in the last note has two remarks on this subject, which are scarcely consistent. In his 5th chapter he says, "that the primary view of the Jewish worship established by Moses, was typical and præfigurative of Christ and his gospel; and intended, by resembling and representing things future, to put the Jews in mind of a Messiah to come, and by faith in the sacrifice and satisfaction to be made by *the lamb slain from the beginning of the world*, to lead them to God." Yet in the former chapter, he had said of the Jews, "it may be doubted whether God intended to have burdened them with all the ceremonial parts of the old religion, and, in particular, if it had not been for the hardness of their hearts, whether he would have restored the worship by sacrifices, and not rather have given them a more pure and moral religion." He adds, "There were no sacrifices appointed in the two tables delivered to Moses, and we have the testimony of God himself (Jer. vii. 22—24), declaring in a very solemn manner, that he gave them no command about burnt-offerings and sacrifices till they discovered their inclination to return back to the Egyptian idolatry." *Young. Idol. Cor. I.* pp. 177 and 185. Does it not hence appear that, but for the Jews' propensity to *Egyptian idolatry*, they might have had a *more pure and moral religion* without any anticipations of what this learned divine considered as the Christian doctrine of Atonement?

without supposing that there was *originally*, and in the Divine mind, a reference from the one to the other. Thus when the apostle Paul says, 1 Cor. x. 2, that the Israelites "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea," he can hardly be supposed to have meant, that the sprinkling of the water upon that people, or their being, as it were, plunged in it, by the water rising over their heads, was a proper type of baptism; but only, that by a common figure of speech, it might be so termed; or that the *rock* which supplied them with water was really Christ, as the same apostle calls it, 1 Cor. x. 4, or a type of Christ, but only that, in some respects, it might be compared to him, or he to it.

In some cases also, it is very possible, that the apostles and evangelists might imagine there was a reference to Christ when no such thing was originally intended.

It is very remarkable, that when the sacrifices under the law are spoken of in the Old Testament, as insufficient to render the offerer acceptable to God, there is never the most distant allusion to any more perfect sacrifice, to which they are commonly supposed to have referred, and of which they are said to have been the types, but to *good works* only, which are always mentioned in opposition to them. Thus David says, Ps. li. 16, 17, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."\* Now it can hardly be supposed but that, if sacrifices had really been designed for types, there would have been, in some place or other, a reference, more or less plain, to the thing which they were intended to prefigure, and from their relation to which they derived all their efficacy.

Lastly, several of the Hebrew customs were intended to commemorate remarkable occurrences in their history, especially such as led them to recollect and reflect upon the Divine interpositions in their favour. Thus, the Pass-over was instituted in commemoration of the destroying angel having passed over the houses of the Israelites, when he killed the first-born in every family of the Egyptians;

\* This particular passage is differently rendered in the Seventy, and by this means probably the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. x. came to give a different turn to it. See, however, the following passages which express the same sentiment with this. Is. i. 10. lxvi. 2, &c. Jer. vi. 8, &c. Amos v. 21, &c. Micah vi. 6, &c. P.

the feast of Pentecost was a memorial of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; and the feast of Tabernacles, of their residing many years in the Wilderness, when they lived in tents, and were fed with manna from heaven. Also the rite of Circumcision was instituted as a token and pledge of the covenant which God made with Abraham, or of the promise that he would give him the land of Canaan.

It is not easy to say how far, and in what respects, the Jewish dispensation was intended to be abrogated by Christianity. Christ himself gave no hint of any such design, except it be implied in his saying, Matt. v. 18, that "one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled;" or in his discourse with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 21 and 23, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

And though the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, ch. vii. 4, argues, in a figurative manner, that the Jews were become "dead to the law by the body of Christ," that they might "be married to another," yet it appears from the book of Acts, that he himself strictly conformed to the temple-service, as all other Jewish Christians did, after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Paul did not only himself walk "orderly," and keep "the law," Acts xxi. 24, but caused Timothy to be circumcised upon his conversion to Christianity, because his mother was a Jewess, though his father was a Greek. Acts xvi. 3.

With respect to *meats*, the Divine Being seems to have intimated to Peter, that the distinction between clean and unclean was abolished. For by the vision of the sheet let down from heaven, Acts x. 11, and the command, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," it seems to have been intended to intimate, not only that no nation or people were unclean in the sight of God, but that those kinds of food which the Jews had been taught to consider as unclean, were now no longer so. We also find that Peter himself, when he was among the Gentiles, at Antioch, lived "after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as—the Jews;" Gal. ii. 14; though, upon the arrival of Jews from Jerusalem, he abstained, for fear of giving offence; a conduct for which he was justly reprov'd by Paul.

As long as the temple stood, the service of it was kept up, and attended upon by the believing, as well as the un-

believing Jews, and none of the apostles dropped so much as a hint of there being any thing improper or wrong in it. When the temple was destroyed, the service of it ceased of course, just as it did at the Babylonish captivity. But it is remarkable, that in the prophecies of Ezekiel, relating to the restoration of the Jews, the most express mention is made of the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of the temple-service, and especially of sacrifices. Ezekiel xliii. 18. And it will hardly be supposed, that the conversion of the Jews to Christianity will not take place at least very soon after their restoration.

As the Jews are still to continue a distinct people, and will probably be the medium of the Divine communications to the rest of the world, it is not improbable but they will always continue to be distinguished by certain peculiar observances and religious rites; but whether the whole, or what particular part of their ancient ritual will be retained, it is impossible for us to say.\*

#### § 4. *Of Baptism.*

ALL the positive institutions, of which an account has yet been given, were antecedent to Christianity. The two which remain to be treated of, viz. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are peculiar to it.

Baptism is the appointed manner in which a person takes upon him the profession of Christianity, or by which a person is admitted to the privileges of the disciples of Christ; and was probably intended to represent the washing away, or renouncing the impurities of some former state, viz. the sins he had committed, and the vicious habits he had contracted; and it is to be observed, that the profession of repentance always accompanied, or was understood to accompany, the profession of faith in Christ. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the general exhortation both of John the Baptist and of Christ; and, "Repent and believe the gospel; Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," was the general strain of the apostles' preaching. Now, says Paul to the Athenians, God "commandeth all men, every where to repent." Acts xvii. 30.

\* See the Author on "The Perpetuity of the Jewish Ritual." Theol. Repos. V. p. 403, VI. p. 1, and his "Letters to the Jews." 1787. Let. V.

We find no account of baptism, as a distinct religious rite, before the mission of John, the forerunner of Christ, who was called *the Baptist*, on account of his being commanded by God to baptize with water all who should hearken to his invitation to repent. Washing, however, accompanied many of the Jewish rites, and, indeed, was required after contracting any kind of uncleanness. Also, soon after the time of our Saviour, we find it to have been the custom of the Jews solemnly to baptize, as well as to circumcise all their proselytes. As their writers treat largely of the *reasons* for this rite, and give no hint of its being a novel institution, it is probable, that this had always been the custom antecedent to the time of Moses, whose account of the rite of circumcision, and of the manner of performing it, is by no means circumstantial. Or baptism, after circumcising, might have come into use gradually, from the natural propriety of the thing, and its easy conformity to other Jewish customs. For, if no Jew could approach the tabernacle, or temple, after the most trifling uncleanness, without bathing, much less would it be thought proper to admit a proselyte from a state so impure and unclean as Heathenism was conceived to be, without the same mode of purification.

When a master of a family became a proselyte to Judaism, he was required to circumcise both himself and his household. Thus Abraham was expressly commanded to circumcise both his son Ishmael, who had no interest in the promise of which circumcision was a seal, and also all his slaves, those who were bought with his money. Gen. xvii. 13.

The reason of this practice does not easily appear to us, whose customs and modes of thinking are so different from those which prevailed, and which still prevail, in the East. The power of a master of a family was very extensive, and the actions and customs by which he expressed his own character or resolution generally extended to all the branches of it. Thus, when the Ninevites made solemn profession of their repentance, they clothed even their cattle in sack-cloth, and made them fast, as well as themselves; not that they could imagine that the brute beasts were capable of repentance, or could have done any thing to displease God; but this mournful appearance of every thing about them was conceived to be expressive of *their own* contrition and humiliation. Jonah iii. 7.\*

It being the universal custom, therefore, for the master of

a family to circumcise, and probably, also, to baptize his children and slaves, as well as himself, upon his making profession of Judaism, and the propriety of the thing being exceedingly obvious to all the people in the East, it would be taken for granted that baptism, if it was used at all, was to be administered in the same undistinguished manner, when a person made profession of Christianity; and the command to *baptize all nations* would necessarily have been understood in this sense, unless our Lord had added some express restriction.

Accordingly we find, that when the jailor, who had the custody of Paul, was converted, both himself was baptized, and *all his*: Acts xvi. 33: Also, when Lydia was converted, it is said, that she was baptized, and *her household*: Acts xvi. 15. Now, by this phrase, a Jew, and even a Roman, would necessarily understand, that both the principal person himself, and all who were *under his immediate power*, either as a parent or a master, were included.

What the Jews did with respect to young men, grown up to years of understanding, but living with their parents, when they were converted to Judaism, is not said; but it is probable, that they were not circumcised without their own consent, as in general it must have been the case with slaves. And since Christianity is evidently more of a *personal* concern, and men are chiefly interested in it as individuals, and not as members of societies, or even of families, it may be taken for granted, that only young children were required to be baptized along with their believing parents.

As slaves, we find, were often converted without their masters, and Christianity made no distinction between bond or free, as being of the same value in the eye of God, it will hardly be thought probable, that slaves were ever baptized without their own consent. At least, the custom did not continue long, especially as slaves were about that time growing more independent of their masters, acquiring civil as well as religious privileges; till at length, through the influence of maxims which Christianity greatly countenanced, they were universally manumitted in Europe.\*

The baptism of children, therefore, is to be considered as one part of a man's own profession of Christianity, and consequently an obligation upon him to educate his children in the principles of the Christian religion. If a child

\* A learned Advocate attributes "the decline of domestic slavery in Europe," amongst other causes, to "a persuasion that the cruelty and oppression almost necessarily incident to it were irreconcilable with the pure morality of the Christian dispensation." Hargrave's *Argument in the Case of James Sommersett, a Negro*. 1778. P. 22.

have no parents, or none who will engage for his religious instruction, other persons, who will undertake this kind office, are so far its parents, and therefore may baptize it, as they would do their own children.

Lastly, I would observe, that it is an argument in favour of the baptizing of infants, to which I do not see how any satisfactory reply can be made, that it appears, from the history of the Christian church, to have been the constant practice from the time of the apostles. The first mention that is made of it is as of an *uncontroverted practice*, and it is even *argued from*, as an universally received custom, against very intelligent persons, to whose cause it would have been of the greatest advantage to have proved it to be novel, or of no authority. This was more especially the case with Pelagius; for, though Austin, in support of his doctrine of original sin, appeals to the practice of infant baptism, as being necessary to do it away, his antagonist does not pretend to dispute the fact, but only denies that this was the use of it.

Now it is certainly highly improbable, that such a custom as that of infant-baptism should have been established so early as it appears to have been, contrary to the apostolical practice, and no trace be left of the innovation; especially when every thing belonging to Christianity, about which all persons were not entirely agreed, became so soon the subject of the most eager contention and debate. And it does not appear to be of any consequence by what argument we can infer, that any opinion or practice was apostolical, whether by their own writing, or any other *sufficient evidence*. They could not themselves be mistaken in a case of this nature, and their practice is an authoritative rule for us.\*

\* These opinions, that the *custom of infant-baptism* originated in *apostolical practice*, and that such baptism is *one part of a man's own profession of Christianity*, the Author maintained through life; and among the latest employments of his pen was "A Treatise on Baptism," which, according to Mr. Joseph Priestley's Memoir, "he wrote and printed in 1802, chiefly in answer to the observations of Mr. Robinson on the subject." Those, however, who are still inquiring whether unconscious infants, as well as persons of age sufficient to make a profession for themselves, were the subjects of baptism according to *apostolical practice*, and whether there can be any such subjects of baptism among the *professors* of Christianity, may consult Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophecy*, Sect. xviii.; *Emlyn's* "Previous Question—Whether there be any Necessity for the continual Use of Baptism among the Posterity of Baptized Christians," 1710, *Works*, I. p. 389; and *Wakefield's Plain and Short Account of the Nature of Baptism according to the New Testament*, 1781. In this writer's opinion, "it appears, from *Scripture* evidence, that baptism, according to the true meaning and design of that institution, can have no place at all among the inhabitants of a Christian country." P. 64. Digitized by Google

### § 5. *Of the Lord's Supper.*

THE Lord's supper, consisting of eating bread, and drinking wine, is a religious rite instituted by Christ, in commemoration of his death; the breaking of the bread, more especially representing the wounding of the body of Christ, and the pouring out of the wine the shedding of his blood; and this rite is to continue to be celebrated by the disciples of Christ till his second coming.

The design of this institution being to serve as a memorial, or record, of that important fact of the death of Christ, it may be considered as one monument of the truth of the Christian religion, as was observed in a preceding part of this work.

Being more especially a memorial of the death of Christ, in which he chiefly manifested the love that he bore to mankind, it furnishes the most proper opportunity of recollecting the love of Christ, and rejoicing in the consideration of the blessings of his gospel.

Since this rite is peculiar to Christians, it likewise serves as a public declaration of our being Christians; and is, consequently, a recognizing of the obligation we are under to live as becomes Christians: for no man can say *that he is a Christian*, and especially in a public and solemn manner, without acknowledging that he is obliged to live as becomes a Christian. Joining habitually in public worship, implies very much the same thing.

Lastly, as, in this rite, we more especially commemorate the death of Christ, it serves to remind us, that we are the professed disciples of a crucified Master; and, therefore, must not expect better treatment from this world than our Lord met with from it: that we must lay our account with meeting with hardships, reproach and persecution, as he did, and that we should contentedly and patiently bear them, rather than quit the profession of our faith, or do any thing unworthy of it; in full assurance that, if "we suffer" with Christ, "we shall also reign with him," and "be glorified together." Rom. viii. 18. 2 Tim. ii. 12.

This rite having such excellent moral uses, and the celebration of it being an express command of Christ, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me," I do not see how any person, professing Christianity, can satisfy himself with refusing to join in it. In the primitive times, the celebration of the Lord's supper made a part of the ordinary service

every Lord's day, and every person who was thought worthy to be considered as a member of a body of Christians partook of it. Whenever, indeed, any person professing Christianity behaved in a manner unworthy of the Christian name, so as to be in danger of bringing a reproach upon it, he was excommunicated; in consequence of which, he was cut off from joining in any part of Christian worship, and from this among the rest; but there was no distinction made between this and other parts of the service, especially the prayers of the church. An excommunicated person was one who was publicly declared not to belong to a Christian society; and, therefore, the church would not consent to any thing that should imply their acknowledging him in the character of a brother, and declined associating with him. The reason of this conduct was most evident; because the good name of Christians, and of Christian societies, was a thing of the greatest consequence to the propagation of Christianity in those early times; and it ought to be considered, at all times, as a matter of great consequence.

Considering that Christ absolutely requires of all his disciples the most open and public profession of his religion, notwithstanding all the hazards to which it may expose them, and has declared, that unless we "confess him before men," he will not acknowledge us before his heavenly Father; it certainly behoves all Christians to take this, as well as every other method, of declaring, in a public manner, their profession of Christianity. Moreover, as baptism is generally administered in infancy, and is not the act of the person baptized, it seems necessary that there should be some public act, by which those who are baptized in their infancy should openly, and in their own persons, declare themselves Christians; and the most proper manner of doing this is certainly the receiving of the Lord's supper.\*

According to the custom of the primitive church, a custom so ancient and uncontroverted, as, with me, to carry sufficient evidence of its having been an apostolical one, all persons who are baptized, children as well as others, should receive the Lord's supper.† It is nothing less than the

\* See the Author's *Address on the Lord's Supper*. 3d Ed. 1774.

† See King's *Enquiry*, Pt. ii. Ch. iii. S. 2. Calvin, though he disapproves infant-communion, yet thus admits its antiquity: "Fuit quidem id in veteri ecclesia factitatum, ut ex Cypriano et Augustino constat." Instit. L. 4. Cap. xvi. S. 30. He also quotes Servetus, as arguing against *infant-baptism*, because *infants* must, in consistency, be received to the *communion*. S. 31. Mr. James Peirce, wrote "An Essay on the Ancient Practice of giving the Eucharist to Children," published after his death, in 1726. See Doddridge *Lect. Prop.* clv. Schol. 5; also the Author's *Address* on this subject, 1773.

revival of this custom that will secure a general attendance upon this ordinance; and no objection can be made to it, except what may, with equal strength, be made to bringing children to public worship at all, since they are as incapable of understanding the one as the other. Nor would this ancient and useful custom have been ever laid aside, if it had not been for the introduction of a train of superstitious notions, which made this plain and simple ordinance appear continually more mysterious and awful; till, at length, the monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation was completely established.

Indeed, it is not a little remarkable, that the custom of giving the eucharist to children, was not finally abolished in any place till that doctrine had obtained the full sanction of the church of Rome; and that it maintains its ground to this very day, in all those Christian churches which were never subject to that antichristian power, whose spiritual usurpations and corruptions of the gospel have been immense, and have extended to almost every thing belonging to it.\*

## SECTION VI.

### *Of the Government of Christian Churches.*

I SHALL conclude these observations on the positive institutions of Christianity with a short account of the primitive regulations for the government of Christian churches: which, though not of Divine appointment, were such as the wisdom of the apostles thought to be the most convenient for transacting the business of Christian societies, and making them subservient to the purpose of improvement in knowledge and goodness.

Christian churches were formed upon the plan of the Jewish synagogues, in which a number of the more elderly and respectable members presided, with the title of *elders*, or *overseers*, which in the Greek language is expressed by the

\* *Brerewood* quotes an author who describes "the *Muscovites* and *Russians*," who "were converted to Christianity by the *Grecians*," as "receiving children after 7 years old to the communion, saying that, at that age they beginne to sinne against God." *Enquiries touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions*, 4to. 1622, p. 136. Yet in *Smith's* "Account of the Greek Church," is the following thrice repeated proclamation of the deacon, before the consecration of the elements, as translated from a Greek writer: "Whosoever of you are *Catechumeni* depart; let none of the *Catechumeni* stay: you who are of the number of the faithful, or compleat Christians, stay." *Account*, 1680, p. 132. In "The Russian Catechism, Church Government and Ceremonies—published by Order of the Czar," and translated into English in 1725, there is an account of the *Lord's Supper*, but no hint of *Infant-communion*. P. 65.

word which in English is rendered *bishop*; and one of these persons was generally, by way of pre-eminence in point of honour, but not of power, styled the chief, or master of the synagogue.\*

The principal business of elders in Christian churches was to attend equally to the instruction and good conduct of the society, and to pass censures in case of improper conduct. In general, some of them gave more particular attention to reading and exhortation, and from these elders, the society usually expected an exposition of those portions of Scripture which were read in their assemblies every Lord's day; but any person who was present might, with the leave of the bishop, either expound the Scriptures, or exhort the people.

These elders were chosen by the people,† and, with their approbation, were *ordained*, or recommended to the Divine blessing by prayer, in which the elders of other churches assisted. Along with prayer they used *imposition of hands*, which was nothing more than a ceremony which they constantly used when they prayed for any particular person, on any occasion whatever; and to this the extension of the hands of the person who prayed over, or towards any larger body of people, corresponded.

Besides elders, there were also, in all Christian churches, persons who attended to the civil concerns of them, under the title of *deacons*. These were generally younger persons, of good character, who, if they behaved well in this office, were afterwards advanced to the rank of elders.

At the first appointment of officers in Christian churches, there was no settled provision for their maintenance, but money was collected every Lord's day, out of which a dis-

\* Lord King has shewn from the ancient authorities which he adduced, that among the primitive Christians, "there was but one bishop to a church," and "but one church to a bishop," whose "diocese exceeded not the bounds of a modern parish." See "Enquiry into the Constitution of the Primitive Church. By an Impartial Hand," Pt. 1. Ch. i. and ii. 1691, when the learned author, who became Chancellor of England, was only 22 years of age.

† "When the bishop of a church was dead, all the people of that church met together in one place to choose a new bishop." *Enquiry*, Pt. 1. p. 23. This subject brings to recollection a name which it is always grateful to remember, *Granville Sharp*, the descendant of an archbishop, and a strict adherent to the doctrine and worship of the Church of England. He seems to have attributed to bishops, larger dioceses than they held, according to Lord King; yet so convinced was that learned and excellent man of their ancient popular election that, while arguing against Negro Slavery, he digressed into a Note to declare his opinion against the courtly practice of *Compt d'elire*. See *The Law of Retribution*, 1776, p. 332. Blackstone also acknowledges, that the election of a bishop "in very early times—was promiscuously performed by the laity, as well as the clergy." Comment. B. i. C. ii. *ad init.* 15 Ed. I. p. 377.

tribution was made to all who stood in need of it, officers and others, promiscuously. For, at the first promulgation of Christianity, no person could have been educated for the ministry. All equally lived by their several professions, and therefore no person was entitled to more consideration in this respect than another. But afterwards, when Christianity got a firm establishment, many young persons devoted themselves wholly to the service of Christian churches, and prepared themselves for that work by a diligent study of the Scriptures, and proper exercises ; and thus, giving their whole time and labour to the society, they were, as was reasonable, wholly maintained out of the funds of it.

## CHAPTER III.

### OF THE FUTURE EXPECTATIONS OF MANKIND DERIVED FROM REVELATION.



#### SECTION I.

##### *Of a Future State in general.*

FROM the light of nature we are able to make out a tolerable system of natural religion, as far as it respects the *duty of men* in this life, though the particulars were such as can only be said to have been *discoverable* by nature, since they were not actually *discovered* by it. But nature was a much less sufficient guide with respect to the information, in which we are so much interested, concerning our expectations after death. It even left us under great uncertainty, whether we should survive the grave or not; though, upon the supposition of our surviving the grave, we were able, from the consideration of the equity of God's moral government, to infer, that the event would be very desirable to good men, and much to be dreaded by the wicked; the former having sufficient reason, from present appearances, to conclude, that the Divine Being is a friend to virtue, and, therefore, disposed to reward them for their adherence to it, and the latter having equal reason to dread his displeasure.

Since, however, no reasons of justice or equity could lead men to expect more than an *adequate* punishment, proportioned to their crimes, there was far from being any reason to imagine that future punishments would be eternal, especially if they were exquisite; because no crimes of a finite nature, committed by frail and finite creatures, could deserve it. An alternative, therefore, remained, either to suppose an extinction of the wicked, with or without any other punishment; or that future sufferings would operate like the sufferings of this present life, tending to correct and amend those who are subject to them.

There was some hope, therefore, that, after an adequate

punishment, those who were not reclaimed in this world might be effectually cured of their vicious propensities, by the more severe and durable punishments of another, so as to enter upon a new state of trial with more advantage, though they might still be far behind those who had made the most of their present advantages. In this case, the punishments of the wicked may properly enough be said to be eternal, because they would never arrive at that state of perfection and happiness, which was attained to by those who entered earlier on a course of virtue.

Such is the substance of what we were able to collect from nature concerning a future state, provided there were any such thing. From revelation we learn the actual certainty of a future state, and have an absolute assurance of its being a state of exact retribution, in which every man shall receive according to his works. But this being all that is necessary to influence our present conduct, we are still at a loss, and left in a great measure to our conjectures, with respect to the precise *nature*, and final *issue*, of the future state.

This important revelation of a future life seems to have been made to mankind in a gradual manner. At least but little stress seems to have been laid upon it in the early ages of the world, so that it was not fully *brought to light*, so as to become the great governing principle of men's conduct, till the dispensation of the gospel of Christ.

Enoch being said to have been a *preacher of righteousness*, and having been taken from the world without dying, perhaps in the view of multitudes, it is not very improbable but that he might have been commissioned to announce this great doctrine to mankind. His miraculous assumption might be intended to intimate that God, being the friend of the virtuous, would provide for the continuance of their being; and they might conclude, that he who could continue life without dying, could even raise men from the dead.

With the old patriarchs, and mankind in general, in the early ages of the world, the prospect of being the *founders of nations*, which every person had then the chance of being, was so great an idea, and struck them so forcibly, that it, in a manner, superseded all other motives to virtue. It is on this argument, therefore, and other temporal considerations, that peculiar stress is laid in the exhortations to obedience addressed to them.

As the institutions of Moses respected the Jews as a

*nation*, and the immediate object of it was *temporal prosperity*, there is the less reason to expect a particular mention of it in his laws; though it cannot but be owned to be a little surprising, that there should be no *incidental mention* of it in any of his writings.

We find some allusions, though not very plain ones, to the state of mankind after death, in several parts of the Old Testament, especially in the book of Psalms; as, Ps. xvi. 8—11, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell: neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Ps. xvii. 15: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

But there seems to be very express mention of a future state in the following passage of the book of Job, ch. xix. 25: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."\*

In the book of Daniel there is still a more express mention of a resurrection, and of the condition of the righteous and of the wicked after it. Dan. xii. 2: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." There seems, also, to be a particular promise to Daniel of his own resurrection in the concluding words of the book, ver. 13, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." He was then too old† to have any more preferment in this life, and he had all the power that a subject could have.

\* See the Author's "Knowledge of a Future State among the Hebrews," and his *Notes*. Also Dr. Taylor's "Scheme of Scripture Divinity," 1762, p. 240, or Watson's *Tracts*, I.; Scott's *Job*, 2d Ed. 1773, App. No. iii. and Gray's *Key*, 2d Ed. 1791, p. 253. Dr. Watts conjectured that "in some bright hours, and particularly in this text, Job was carried by inspiration above the level of the dispensation under which he lived." *Strength and Weakness of Human Reason*, Conf. i. Works, 1800, III. p. 45; Note. See, on the other side of this question, besides Warburton's *Div. Legat.*, the opinion of *Le Clerc*, in *Law's Theory*, p. 78, Note (m).

† "Between ninety and a hundred." See the Author's *Notes*.

In the history of the Maccabees, who bravely suffered death rather than abandon their religion, we see the fullest confidence in their expectation of a happy resurrection, especially in what was said by the mother and her seven sons,\* at their martyrdom, the particulars of which, being very striking, I shall here quote. 2 Mac. vii. 9—23: "And when he," viz. the second son, "was at the last gasp, he said, Thou, like a fury, takest us out of this present life; but the King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life." The third, speaking of his tongue and hands, which they were going to mangle, said, ver. 11, "These I had from heaven; and for his laws I despise them, and from him I hope to receive them again." The fourth, when he was ready to die, said, ver. 14, "It is good, being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him: as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life." Lastly, the mother "exhorted them in her own language," ver. 21, saying, "I cannot tell how ye came into my womb, for I neither gave you breath, nor life, neither was it I that formed the members of every one of you; but doubtless the Creator of the world, who formed the generation of man, and found out the beginning of all things, will also, of his own mercy, give you breath and life again, as ye now regard not your own selves."

The manner in which the belief of a resurrection is here expressed, clearly shews, that it was no *novel* doctrine among the Jews of those times, but that they considered themselves as speaking agreeably to the faith of all their ancestors; and it is hard to conceive how they could have been mistaken in this. The doctrine of a resurrection from the dead never occurred to any of the Heathens, even those who supposed that there might be a future life. It does not seem, therefore, that this general and firm expectation of the Jews, which was peculiar to themselves, and contrary to all present appearances, could have had any other origin than Divine revelation, though we have no account when, or to whom, this revelation was made.

This argument, *a posteriori*, makes it probable, that David, and other writers of the Old Testament, did really refer to the doctrine of a resurrection, and a future life, in those passages to which, without the knowledge of what were

\* Though this particular story should be fabulous, it is no less an evidence of the opinion that prevailed among the Jews before the time of our Saviour. P. Dr. Lardner was of opinion that "the whole story has the appearance of a contrived fiction." See his "Inquiry into the Truth of the History of the Seven Brothers," first published in the *Library*, 1762. Works. XI. 269.

the sentiments of the Jews afterwards, we might naturally enough have been led to give a different interpretation. Had there been any new revelation of so important a doctrine between the time of David and the Maccabees (as it was a period in which many eminent Jewish prophets flourished), we might naturally expect to have found some particular account of it. But, supposing it to have been the universal opinion of the patriarchs, founded upon some well-known, though very ancient revelation, and never to have been forgotten, or lost sight of, by the pious Israelites (though it was quite lost with the rest of the world), we may much better satisfy ourselves with finding so little express mention of it.

With the Pharisees, among the Jews, in our Saviour's time, the expectation of a resurrection was universal; though it appears that, in some respects, they had a very imperfect idea of it,\* and the Sadducees altogether denied it. Thus Martha, the sister of Lazarus, says to our Saviour, when he told her that her brother should rise again, John xi. 24, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day;" which evidently shews, that she took the doctrine for granted, without seeming to have learned it from Christ.

In all the New Testament, we find the greatest possible stress laid upon this doctrine. Christians having no expectations, as the Jews had, from temporal considerations, expected all their reward in a future life. All the recompense they looked for, on account of their sufferings in the cause of truth and righteousness, was *at the resurrection of the just*. This, therefore, is the great sanction of virtue in Christianity, which inculcates, upon the professors of it, that they are to consider themselves as *not of this world*, but as *citizens of heaven*, and only *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, in full assurance that, *by patient continuance in well-doing*, they shall, at length, attain to *glory, honour, immortality and eternal life*.

We likewise learn, in the gospel, that Christ is appointed both to raise all the dead, and to judge the world at the last day. Addressing himself to the Jews, he says, John vi. 40, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting

\* *Prideaux*, after *Josephus*, says, it "was no more than a *Pythagorean* resurrection." *Con. Pt. ii. B. v. III. p. 479.* Dr. South represents  $\S$  the opinion common amongst the Jews also at this day, that there is a *metempsychosis*, or transmigration of souls from one body to another." *Sermons. VIII. p. 294.*

life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Speaking to Martha, upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus, he says, John xi. 25, "I am the resurrection, and the life:" and when he was solemnly adjured by the high priest, at his trial, to say whether he was the Christ, he said, Mark xiv. 62, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Our Lord gives a more particular account of the proceedings of this great day, Matt. xxv. 31—41: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:" when he will say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" but to the wicked he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

The reason why Christ should be appointed by God to act this illustrious part, is pretty clearly intimated to be his being a *man*, viz. of the same rank and species with ourselves. John v. 22: "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." And, ver. 27, he "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man;" so that being, with respect to his nature, in all respects, like ourselves, subject to the same infirmities and passions, we may be well assured that he will *feel for us*, and be disposed to make all the reasonable allowances that our situation and circumstances shall require; so that we can have no reason to complain, or be apprehensive of unjust severity from our judge. For this reason, among others, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews observes, ch. ii. 10, that "it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,—to make the captain of *our* salvation perfect through sufferings;" ver. 17, that "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;" that he should *not* be an angel, but of "the seed of Abraham,—that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest" for us.

We are informed that, at the second coming of Christ, the virtuous shall be raised first, and immediately after that, a *change*, which shall supersede death, will take place upon all who are alive; in consequence of which, their bodies, as well as those who are raised from the dead, will become incorruptible, and not subject to die any more. These par-

particulars we are informed of in the following passages of Scripture. 1 Thess. iv. 13—17: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 42: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Ver. 50—53: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound), and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Hence we may clearly infer, that all bodily imperfections will be removed, so that every person will appear with his full powers of body and mind; but whether any will rise in the state of *infancy*, we are not informed.

## SECTION II.

### *Of the Nature of Future Rewards and Punishments.*

THE happiness of the righteous, after the resurrection, is expressed in such terms as makes it appear to be the most desirable thing that can be conceived by man; but still the terms are *general*, and give us no distinct idea of the nature of it. Nor, indeed, was this at all necessary: nay, our hopes and wishes are, perhaps, more strongly engaged without that circumstance.

Sometimes the future happiness is described as a *state of rest*. Rev. xiv. 13: "Blessed are the dead which die in

the Lord," for they "rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

But most frequently it is spoken of as a state of *indefinite and positive happiness*. It is said of the virtuous, in the book of Revelation, ch. vii. 16, 17, that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. xxi. 3, 4: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them,—and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The happiness of the righteous is also represented as a state of *glory* and honourable distinction, and that of the wicked as a state of infamy and disgrace. The angel informs Daniel, ch. xii. 2, 3, that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, for ever and ever." To this passage our Lord probably alluded, when he said, Matt. xiii. 43, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."

There can be no doubt but that, as *moral excellence* is the only preparative to future happiness, so it will be a necessary ingredient in it. And every truly good man will look forward, with joy, to the time when all sin, and every propensity to it, shall be no more, and when his nature will be as excellent as it is capable of being.

The happiness of heaven, like the happiness of generous virtue in this life, we have reason to think, will not be of an indolent, but of an *active* nature; and our benevolence being perfected, we shall, probably be employed in promoting the happiness of other beings; which may engage us in a variety of the most vigorous and unremitted pursuits. This idea is favoured by almost every representation which our Lord gives us, in his parables, of the rewards of the righteous. Thus, it is usual with him, to compare it to a *kingdom*, and the exercise of *dominion*, in various forms; which suggests the idea of a scene of great *exertion*, as well as of dignity, splendour and authority. He

that had improved two talents, was made ruler over two cities; he that had improved five talents, was made ruler over five cities; and to both of them he says, Matt. xxv. 21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Speaking concerning the same subject, he says, Matt. xxiv. 45—47, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

Considering the intelligent nature of man, and the pleasure we naturally take in the acquisition of knowledge, it can hardly be supposed but that an enlarged acquaintance with the works and providence of God, will make a considerable part of the happiness of the wise and good hereafter. We shall, probably, have the best opportunity of gaining a thorough knowledge of the constitution, and mutual relations of things in the world that we inhabit; and having it in our power to converse with the chief actors in all great events, we shall be better acquainted with the true history of the world, and may thereby better trace the wonderful conduct of Divine Providence in all the affairs of it.

Lastly, if our natures be at all the same that they are now, we shall, no doubt, receive the highest satisfaction from conversing with our wise and virtuous acquaintance, talking over the transactions in which we were concerned in this world; when all the labours, fatigues and sufferings which we underwent, in the cause of virtue and Christianity, will, like the recollection of all difficulties surmounted in a good cause at present, be the source of great joy and exultation.\*

That all the virtuous will not be admitted to the same degree of honour and happiness hereafter, is agreeable both to reason, and to the Scriptures, which teach us, that every man shall receive "according to his works;" that he "which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully;" but he "which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly." 2 Cor. ix. 6.

On the other hand, the *punishment of the wicked* is described in the Scriptures, in such a manner, as, if the repre-

sentation be at all attended to, cannot but alarm our fears to the utmost. But still the terms are *general*, and leave us to expect some very terrible, but *unknown suffering*, and of very long, but uncertain duration.

Not unfrequently, the anguish of the mind, which is to be the portion of the wicked after death, is represented as derived, in a great degree, from a sense of their *exclusion from the happiness*, to which they see the virtuous, who had been the objects of their contempt and abuse, advanced; and this circumstance must necessarily be a very great aggravation of the punishment of *hell*, which is the term by which the place of future punishment is sometimes denominated in the Scriptures. Thus, when the good and virtuous are represented as going to a *marriage supper*, the wicked are said to be *shut out*, and remain in "outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;" Matt. xxii. 13. This, also, is said to be the fate of the *unprofitable servant*, who had neglected to improve his talent, Matt. xxv. 30: and of the *five foolish virgins* it is likewise said, that, coming too late, they found the door shut, and admission refused to them; ver. 11, 12.

But other accounts of the future state of the wicked, lead us to expect very *severe positive sufferings*; as 2 Thess. i. 7—9: In that day shall "the Lord Jesus be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

In several passages of the Scripture, the state of the wicked after death is described, as has been hinted before, as a state of *shame and disgrace*, than which nothing is generally more dreaded by mankind, while the righteous are said "not to be ashamed before *Christ* at his coming;" 1 John ii. 28. And certainly the extreme folly of their conduct must appear in a striking and tormenting light to the wicked and profligate, when they shall see how shamefully they have misapplied their time and talents. And this situation will more especially affect those who are used to pride themselves in their cunning and foresight, when they shall see how miserably narrow and short-sighted all their boasted schemes were. Also, how must the sense of their own folly be aggravated, by seeing those whom they had despised inheriting the rewards of *true wisdom*, as well as of virtue, and in knowing that all their base views, and low

unworthy pursuits, are no longer concealed within their own breasts, but laid open to the perfect knowledge of all those to whose censure they are the most sensible !

Very many of those expressions, by which the fate of the wicked is described in the Scriptures, taken in their literal sense, denote utter *destruction*, or extinction of being. Thus, the apostle Peter says, 2 Pet. iii. 7, that the earth is "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men;" and in the passage quoted above, from the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, the punishment of the wicked is called "everlasting destruction." If this should actually be the fate of the wicked, their punishment may more properly be said to be *eternal*, than upon the former supposition, there being no reversion of the sentence, or remission of the rigour of it.\*

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Duration of Future Punishment.*

THE duration of future punishment, according to the Scriptures, as I observed before, will be very long, but uncertain, which is the general meaning of that word which we render *everlasting*; being applied to many things which are expressly said to be of limited duration, as the priesthood of Aaron, and the kingdom in the family of David. For, even if we consider Christ as intended by the seed of David, and that the duration of his dominion was foretold in the prophecies, still his kingdom, we are assured, will have an end, as we learn, 1 Cor. xv. 24 and 28: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;—then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

There can be no doubt, but that the punishment of the wicked will be very awful; but if God be a just and righteous governor, it must be in proportion to the sins, by the commission of which it is incurred; and there is no proportion between finite and infinite. Besides, in the Scriptures, the Divine Being appeals to mankind, whether *his ways be not equal*, that is, just and reasonable; Ezekiel xviii. 25. And Abraham takes it for granted, that "the Judge of all the earth" must do *that which is right*, Gen xviii. 25, that is, what is agreeable to our ideas of justice and equity. It

\* See the Author's latest judgment on this subject. P. 94. Note.

is, moreover, expressly said, Ps. ciii. 9, that God keepeth not his "anger for ever," that *in judgment he remembereth mercy*, and that *he is not extreme to mark iniquity*. These expressions seem to be intended to give us an idea of the Divine character, and the general maxims of his conduct; and must, therefore, respect his government in a future world, as well as this. Also, whenever the Divine justice and mercy are compared, the latter is always represented as of greater extent than the former. Thus he is said, Ex. xx. 5, to visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the *third and fourth generation*," but to shew "mercy unto *thousands* of them that love *him*."

It is remarkable, that the punishment of the wicked is always described in general terms only, expressive of great and uncertain sufferings; whereas, if the doctrine of the *proper eternity* of hell torments had been strictly true, we might have expected, that it would be said, in so many words, that *it should have no end*, and that the greatest stress should always have been laid upon this most important circumstance, as being most interesting and alarming to all mankind.

Our Saviour, indeed, says, Mark ix. 44, that "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" but this is manifestly a figurative expression; and, besides, the words are taken from Isaiah lxvi. 24, where they are applied to the burning of dead bodies. All the meaning may be, that the fire shall not be quenched till it has consumed that which shall be committed to it, so as to have answered its destined end; that is, till those wicked persons who are doomed to those flames, be destroyed, or till their vices be thoroughly corrected.

Christ also says of Judas Iscariot, Matt. xxvi. 24, that "it had been good for *him*, if he had not been born." But this, again, is a figurative expression, used to denote extreme misery and distress in general, especially such as is apt to make men wish, from anguish of mind and impatience, that they had never been born,\* which was the case with Job, though at the time that he used such expressions as these, Job iii., it is probable that his sufferings had been greatly overbalanced by his happiness.

It must likewise be allowed to be an argument of considerable weight against the proper eternity of hell torments, that the number of those who believe and obey the gospel,

\* See Wakefield's *Matthew*, on the text, with the quotations and references. P. 367.

and of the virtuous and good in general, who alone are entitled to the happiness of heaven, is sometimes represented as small, in comparison with that of the disobedient and wicked; as when our Saviour says, Matt. vii. 13, 14, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."\* Now there seems to be no way of reconciling this with the notion of Divine goodness, but upon the supposition that the wicked will either finally perish, like plants or fruits which never come to their maturity, or that just and severe punishment will be a means of correcting and improving them. For God, having a perfect fore-knowledge of all that would actually happen, cannot be supposed to have made a voluntary choice of a system, the final issue of which he knew would be the everlasting and inexpressible misery of the greater part of his creatures.

It must be allowed, however, that the Scriptures represent the punishments of the wicked in a future world to be exceedingly dreadful, so that we have reason to be alarmed to the utmost extent of our faculties. Even this may stagger some; but it will not appear inconsistent with the usual government of God, if it be considered, to how much anguish and distress many *single acts of sin and folly* often expose us in this life; and, therefore, it is very possible, that all the vices of this present state may expose us to inexpressibly greater sufferings in the life to come.†

For some observations on the *moral effect* of the doctrines of the proper eternity, or non-eternity of future punishments, I must refer my reader to the first part of this work. I shall only, in this place, suggest farther, that this, as well as every other great mistake concerning Christianity, is a means of making unbelievers, who will think themselves justified in concluding, without reasoning or inquiry, that no religion can be true, or come from God, which contains a doctrine so manifestly unreasonable and absurd.‡

\* It is proper to observe, however, that, in the opinion of some, this passage, and others of a similar turn, do not relate to the final state of mankind in general; but to the state of things at the time when the words were delivered, and to the outward profession of Christianity only. P.

† See *White's Restoration*, &c. in p. 62, Note †.

‡ See p. 63, Note, and the case of Lord Shaftesbury, Biog. Brit. IV. 286\*.

## SECTION IV.

*Of the Time and Place of Future Rewards and Punishments.*

IT has long been the general opinion of Christians, that the reward of the virtuous, and the punishment of the wicked, will take place immediately after death, when the soul will exist in a conscious state, separate from the body, till the resurrection. But it appears to me, that the notion of the separate existence of the soul, on which this whole doctrine is founded, is built entirely on the false philosophy of the East, according to which, human souls are lapsed angels, fettered in these gross bodies; and is by no means favoured by *present appearances*, according to which the power of thinking depends entirely upon the body, and especially upon the brain; so that any injury being done to the one, a proportionable injury is done to the other.

If thought be suspended in sound sleep, and if for a time we be wholly deprived of it by a blow on the head, much more must all our faculties be deranged, and a period be put to sensation and thought by death.\* And though *particular texts*, especially as they have been usually translated, are speciously enough alleged in favour of an intermediate conscious state, just as single texts have been, with equal plausibility, alleged in favour of all the doctrines of Popery and Calvinism; yet Scriptural arguments of a more *general nature*, derived from a comprehensive view of the order and design of revelation, which are a much surer guide to truth, are strongly conclusive against it.†

\* See Bp. Law and Dr. Taylor, p. 258, Note.

† "Our Lord directs, 'search the Scriptures,' and we have followed his direction upon our present point; to the intent that it might more clearly appear, how much better and more strong evidence there is for this point, and the retribution to be expected at the resurrection, than there is for the separate subsistence of a human soul, as a subject for the rewards and punishments to be expected, in a state future to this life. We may perceive the resurrection is ordained and appointed, to the very intent, that future recompenses for things done in this life may be fully awarded and fully executed. Whereas we find not one text in Scripture that says, in express terms, man hath an immaterial, or separately subsisting, or an immortal soul, nor that tells us recompenses shall be made to it in a future state." Layton, *Search after Souls*. 1691. Pp. 195, 196. See also, *supra*, p. 258, Note, *ad fin.* Milton, in the character of the *Father* addressing his *accepted Son*, says of *Man*—

Death becomes  
His final remedy, and after life  
Try'd in sharp Tribulation, and refin'd  
By Faith, and faithful works, to second life

If the soul be capable of an existence separate from the body, and, as is generally supposed by those who adopt this opinion, be capable of a greater exertion of its powers, when unfettered from this incumbrance of the flesh, what reason could there be for a *resurrection*? The affection, which some persons arbitrarily suppose, that the soul must have for its old companion, is absurd, when it was always a clog and a burden to it.

Also, what occasion was there for a *general judgment*, at the last day, which is clearly the Scripture doctrine, if there will have been a previous separate judgment for every individual of mankind, and they will all have actually received their proper reward or punishment before that time; which, with respect to some of them, will have continued several thousand years? Upon this plan the general judgment must be a mere piece of pomp and parade, without any real use. Whereas, on the contrary, both the righteous and the wicked are represented by our Lord, in his account of the proceedings of that great day, Matt. xxv., as totally ignorant of their future state, and expressing their surprise at the decision of their judge; when, according to this hypothesis, they could not but have been acquainted with it, by dear or joyful experience, long before.\*

If we examine the Scripture *promises*, we shall find no hint given of any thing taking place to the advantage of good men, before *the coming of Christ* to judgment. When our Lord encourages persons to give to the poor, he says, Luke xiv. 14, "They cannot recompense thee;" but "thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just;" not before. The apostle Paul, speaking of the duty

Wak'd in the renovation of the just,  
Resigns him up, with heav'n and earth renew'd.

P. L. xi. l. 61—66.

Could Milton, thus referring to a *second* life, have believed in the *uninterrupted* life essential to the scheme of an intermediate state of consciousness?

\* Another *hypothesis* has been proposed with some variety of argument and illustration, by three learned Christians who do not appear to have had many followers. Their *opinion*, as the earliest of them expresses it, "supposes a continued resurrection and judgment, which shall comprehend the ages of the mediatorial kingdom." See "*A Survey of the Search after Souls*," (erroneously attributed to Dr. Coward,) [by Caleb Fleming, 1758, pp. 237, &c.; "An Attempt to prove that the Resurrection takes place immediately after death," by *Philander*, in *Theol. Repos.* 1770, II. pp. 346—395; the Examination of that Essay, by *Blackburne*, in *Historical Review*, 2d Ed. p. 312; and Alexander's Preliminary Dissertation, 4to. 1766, p. 43. See also an Essay "On the future Life of Man," by that learned and indefatigable investigator of the gospel doctrine, who so well exemplified its precepts, the Rev. Newcome Cappe. *Critical Remarks*, II. p. 271. There was a discussion of this *opinion* in several papers of the *Mon. Repos.* 1811, Vol. VI.

and expectations of Christians, directs their views to the same great event, and to nothing before, or short of it. Titus ii. 11—13: “ For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The apostle Peter had no other idea when he said, 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, “ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you : but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings ; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

The same only time of the reward of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked, is also particularly mentioned, Rev. xi. 16, where the four and twenty elders are said to fall down upon their faces, and to worship God, saying, “ We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty,—because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldest destroy them which destroy (or corrupt) the earth.” All the exhortations of the New Testament go upon this same proper Christian principle.

The punishment of the wicked is also always represented as taking place at the same time, viz. the day of judgment, and not before. Thus it is only “ at the end of the world,” Matt. xiii. 41—43, that our Lord says, “ the Son of Man shall send forth his angels ;” when “ they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire.” Then, and not before, “ shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.”

When the apostles write to comfort the friends of deceased Christians, they drop not the most distant hint of their enjoying any degree of happiness at present ; which is a topic which they could not possibly have overlooked on such an occasion, if they had really believed it, even though they had imagined that the resurrection was ever so near at hand. It is plain, however, that the apostle Paul had not the notion of the resurrection being so very near, when he

wrote the Epistle to the Thessalonians, whom he endeavours to comfort upon this occasion. For, in the second Epistle, which, in this respect, is only explanatory of the former, he speaks of the rise, progress and destruction of the *man of sin*, as to take place before this great event.

On the contrary, all the consolation that he has to offer, is derived from the prospect of the joyful resurrection of their deceased friends. 1 Thess. iv. 13—18: “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.—Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.” The very phrase which the apostle here makes us of, viz. “sleeping in Jesus,” clearly implies, that he had no idea of their being awake, alive and happy.

Besides, we see, in this very passage, that the apostle was apprehensive that the persons to whom he was writing would imagine, that they who should be alive at the second coming of Christ, would at least have *some advantage* over those who should be raised from the dead. For so the word *φθασωμεν* ought to be rendered, and not *prevent*, as in our translation. This suspicion the apostle endeavours to obviate, by shewing that, of the two, those who had been dead would rather have the advantage of the living; since the resurrection of the dead would precede the change that was to pass upon those who should be found alive; and this he relates, as by express revelation from Christ, ver. 15—17: “For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall *have no advantage over* them which are asleep, for—the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,” &c.

Nothing can be more evident, from the consideration of the whole of this passage, than that both the apprehensions of the Thessalonians, and the method which the apostle takes to silence them, go upon the supposition, that neither he nor they had the least notion of any intermediate state.\*

\* “If one of our ministers should endeavour to administer comfort in such a case, he would presently begin at the soul's separate existence, and tell the sorrowful and lamenting friends, they must comfort themselves with the assurance that their departed friend's soul was gone immediately to heaven.—But we may perceive St. Paul takes quite another method of comforting his proselytes and raises all the com-

I would observe, by the way, that by the phrase *being with Christ*, the ancients never understood any degree of happiness that could be enjoyed by good men before the resurrection. For even those Christians who, from their leaning to the principles of the Oriental or Greek philosophy, imagined that the soul had a separate existence, still supposed that it continued in Hades till the resurrection; and, at that time only, upon being united to the body, was taken into heaven to be with Christ. Indeed, our Lord himself says, John xiv. 3, that he must *come again* before he can *receive his disciples to himself*; so that the apostles could not possibly have any expectation of being with Christ before that time.

I think it must a little embarrass the advocates for an intermediate state, to consider how the apostle Paul could avoid making mention of it, or alluding to it, in his long discourse concerning the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. when the subjects must be allowed to have a very near connexion; or how he could represent the consequences of disbelieving the resurrection to be so very great as he describes them, if the souls of all good men were, immediately after death, made completely happy with God and Christ in heaven. On the other hand, it is plain, from the whole tenour of his writings, that neither he nor the Corinthians had any idea of such an intermediate state; since the consequence of their error was nothing less than this, that if there be no resurrection, both *his preaching* and *their faith* were *altogether vain*, ver. 14. Also those who were "fallen asleep in Christ" were *perished*, ver. 18, and they, the apostles, having no hope but "in this life," were "of all men most miserable."

Lastly, our Saviour's argument with the Sadducees, in proof of a resurrection, from the words of God to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," Matt. xxii. 31, Mark xii. 26, Luke xx. 37, is this, that since God is their God, those patriarchs, even now, that they have no life, *live unto him*; that is, they have existence in his sight, who looks into futurity. For, had they been actually alive, and happy at that very time, it might have been replied, that the promise which is implied in God's being *their God*, was sufficiently fulfilled without a resurrection. Indeed his argument might have

fort which he gives them, by building it upon the firm rock of the resurrection." Layton's "Observations upon Mr. Broughton's Psychologia," Pt. ii. 1708. P. 37. See also Alexander, *Prelim. Dissert.* p. 45. For a very different and uncommon interpretation of the passage, see Cappe's *Crit. Rem.* II. p. 259.

been thought to be calculated to prove an intermediate state only, had he not expressly said, that what he advanced was to prove a resurrection, *that the dead shall arise*. He does not so much as mention any state of conscious existence before it; so that, from the circumstances of the discourse we may safely conclude, that he had no idea of any such thing.

It may be said, that our Saviour's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, goes upon the supposition of there being an intermediate state. But this parable is only a personification of what had no real sense; for he does not speak of the soul being separate from the body, but of the *whole man* as having passed into the state of death, and therefore mentions the *tongue* of the rich man as tormented in a flame. In the same manner, Isaiah personifies the dead king of Babylon, whom he, at the same time, speaks of, as consumed by the worms. Isa. xiv. 9—11: "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." There is also an instance of a personification similar to this in Rev. vi. 9, where the *souls of the martyrs* are represented as crying to God from under the altar (the place where the blood of sacrificed victims was poured out) to avenge their blood. But, in other places, *blood* itself is represented as crying for vengeance.

Our Saviour said to the thief upon the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."<sup>\*</sup> But this saying is too obscure to found any certain opinion upon. It may only signify, that the promise was made that day, notwithstanding his present state of humiliation; or, by *paradise*, our Lord might mean, the unconscious state of the virtuous dead, a state of mere rest, but wherein they are secure under the protection of Divine Benevolence, and reserved for the accomplishment of its purposes in their favour. The Jews supposed their *sheol*, or the state of the dead, to be divided into two regions, viz. *paradise* for the good, and *gehenna* for the wicked.<sup>†</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> See page 319 and the Note, also Alexander. Prelim. Dissert. p. 42.

<sup>†</sup> See Windet, ΣΤΡΩΜΑΤΕΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ de Vita Functorum Statu, ex Hebræorum et Græcorum comparatis Sententiis concinnatus 12mo, Lond. 1677.

A passage in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians is urged with the greatest appearance of strength in favour of an intermediate state; but when the whole context is rightly considered, it will appear to imply no such thing, as is, I think, sufficiently proved in Alexander's Dissertation, prefixed to his Commentary on 1 Cor. xv.\* The apostle, writing from Rome, not long before his death, says Philip. i. 21—24, "To me to live is Christ." i. e. Christ will be glorified by my labours, and, "to die is gain," as I shall then be delivered from a state of persecution and suffering; "but if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two;" or, as it might have been rendered, *I am straitened by two things*, viz. the prospect of life, or of death. Neither of them are the objects of my choice, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:" wishing, if it were possible, to be delivered at once from mortality, by the coming of Christ, and so be immediately with him. That this must be the sense of the passage is evident from what I have observed before, viz. that "being with Christ," always refers to his second coming, at the resurrection. "Nevertheless," the apostle goes on to say, "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you;" that is, of the two things which are not the objects of my desire, viz. life or death, more good will accrue to you from the former, and therefore I prefer it.†

The same considerations may also help us to the right understanding of the same apostle, in 2 Cor. v. 8, "We

S. vi. p. 110. P. "Sheol pro loco functorum communi acceptum, Hebræi in duas solent regiones dispescere; Paradisum nempe et Gehennam. Utramque harum regionum in septem mansiones subdividunt; quibus distinctos gradus, hinc felicitatis, illinc miseriæ, adstipulante quadantenus sacra pagina, significatum eunt." Dr. Windet was a learned Physician, who graduated at Leyden, and afterwards at Oxford, in 1656. He became a member of the College of Physicians, and died about 1680. Wood says, that he "was a good Latin Poet, a most excellent Linguist, a great Rabbi, a curious Critic, and rather shaped for Divinity than the faculty he professed." *Athen. Oxon.* II. 790. *Fasti.* On *Sheol*, see also Scott's *Job*. Appen. No. II.

\* See his Prelim. Dissert. pp. 37—40.

† "He was *Paul the aged*, a prisoner, under a necessitous and wanting condition, ready to be offered up by a dolorous death, having but lately escaped out of the mouth of the Lion; and he lay, continually, under great affliction for the Church's sake, and had the care of all the churches lying upon him. All which particulars considered, our Apostle had great reason to choose death, rather than life, in all such respects, as did only concern himself." Layton's "Observations on Wadsworth," p. 122. Dr. Coward says, "Our Saviour seems to intimate to his apostles, his select servants, that they should immediately after death be conveyed to their Master, John xvii. 24. And upon this account St. Paul also desires to die, and be with Christ, though to abide in the flesh was more needful at that time." *Second Thoughts.* Pp. 333, 334.

are—willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord ;” that is, we prefer the future life, which commences at the resurrection, and in which alone we shall be with Christ, to the present, in which we are absent from him. He particularly excepts against the idea of being *unclothed*, or *naked*, ver. 4, “ For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened ; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

Now this being “ clothed upon,” or, as it is expressed, ver. 2, “ clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,” certainly refers to the bodies which we are to receive at the resurrection ; and, it is evident, from ver. 1, that the apostle had no idea of any state between that and the present. “ For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” And since, in the sleep of death, we cannot be sensible of any interval of time, how long soever it may really be, the one will seem immediately to succeed the other ; so that it will appear to us, that the very next moment after closing our eyes in death, we awake at the general resurrection, which is a most sublime and alarming consideration.

Other *single passages* of Scripture are produced in favour of the doctrine of an intermediate state, but none so plausibly as these, and with me they weigh nothing against the force of the *general arguments* above-mentioned

As to the *place* where the virtuous, or the vicious will be disposed of after death, it is absolutely unknown to us, especially the latter ;\* for, as to the former, the apostle Peter seems to intimate, that good men will inhabit this earth after it has been destroyed by fire, and been made habitable again in a more advantageous form, 2 Peter iii. 7 : “ The heavens and the earth which are now, are—reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of

\* Yet there are men who *rush in where angels fear to tread*. An opponent of Dr. Coward says, “ ’tis highly probable, that the miserable place of abode, to wicked spirits between death and judgment, is some middle region of the air,” and not “ as some persons imagine—the dark recesses and subterranean caverns of the earth, somewhere about its centre or middle cavity.” He also *conceives* that “ when wicked souls shall be united to their bodies, raised at the resurrection, and therefore be rendered capable of corporeal torments,” the “ place of their torments will be this lower world, which we now inhabit together with the, at present uninhabitable large tracts of the earth, and the vast dimensions and compass of the seas, then drained of water by the devouring flames, and filled only with sulphureous burning materials of Divine vengeance. *The Evidences of Things not seen*. By L. Smith, L. L. D. Rector of South Warrimborough, 2nd Ed. 1703. Pp. 95—97.

ungodly men." Ver. 10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Ver. 13, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

As the apostle says, that "the earth is reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men," it should seem, that the destruction of this world by fire, is to have some connexion with the punishment of the wicked; and may, perhaps, be the immediate instrument of it. If this be the case, there will be something more than figurative in the description of the torments of the wicked in the Scriptures, as caused by *fire*, and this fire may terminate in the utter extinction of the wicked. But these, it must be acknowledged, are mere conjectures.

A learned friend, being dissatisfied with the preceding interpretation of the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, has suggested another, which to gratify my readers, I shall here insert.

[I freely own, that I am not satisfied with this explanation Philip. i. 21, first, because the apostle does not appear to me to write under any depression, but rather with *triumph* and exultation, ver. 20: "According to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that, with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death."

Secondly, the apostle does not seem to have considered the two things by which he says he was straitened as *evil*, but rather as *good*, and both of them as objects of earnest choice; so good, that his difficulty was, which to prefer, whether to live to Christ, i. e. for the furtherance of the gospel, and the salvation of his fellow-creatures through him, which had long been the object of his ardent wishes and earnest cares and labours, or to die and be with Christ, which would be a gain to himself, and far better for his personal interest. From the whole preceding context, from ver. 12, the apostle appears to have had at the time of writing, no painful feelings of what he had already suffered, either from the malice of open enemies, or treachery of false friends, nor formidable apprehensions of what might yet await him. He rather expresses a quite different state of mind in those words, ver. 18, "And I therein do rejoice,

yea, and will rejoice ;” a state of mind pretty much similar to that which he professed to the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 22—24.

However, I not do think it will follow, that the apostle meant by the words, *to die is gain*, and *to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better*, to convey an idea of a state of *consciousness* and *positive happiness*, which he should enjoy with Christ from the instant of his death till the resurrection. It is enough to justify the expressions, and his desire to depart, if we only suppose him to mean, that he should not only be exempted from farther danger, suffering, opposition and treachery from others, but also from care; solicitude and apprehensions in himself, about his own eternal interests, which he so pathetically expresses, chap. iii. 8—14, and 1 Cor. ix. 27, and elsewhere; that from thenceforth he and his interests would be in *security* under the faithful protection of a powerful Saviour. He would be with Christ in the same sense as Christ promised to the penitent thief, that he should be with him that day in paradise, i. e. in the state of those dead, who are, as it were, within the inclosure of Divine benevolence and power, reserved for the accomplishment of Divine purposes and promises. Now, surely to be admitted to such a state of security, is a proper object of desire to a good mind, even preferably to the continuance of an useful life, but exposed to fears, dangers and sufferings, both from within and without.

This also seems conformable to the apostle's sentiments and expressions on other occasions, 2 Tim. iv. 6—8: “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth,” he does not say, I shall be happy with Christ, but “ there is laid up (*ἀποθηκεῖται*) for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day;” and, chap. i. 12, of the same epistle, “ I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able” (not to make me happy with himself immediately, but) “ to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” I conceive, that the apostle means to convey the same sentiment, that the lives and happiness of his disciples are intrusted to the care and protection of Christ, to be by him restored and perfected at the last day, in those words, Coloss. iii. 3, 4, “ For ye are dead,” (a figure by no means too strong to denote, not only the spiritual professions, but the hazardous circum-

stances of Christians at that time) "and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." The same sentiment seems also to be couched under, and an attention to it throws a beautiful and strong light on, that otherwise obscure passage, 1 Thess. iv. 14: "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him;" intimating, that they are already committed to him by God as a deposit or trust, and that God will then bring them with him, that he may accomplish the purposes of the trust.

The apostle seems to have borrowed these sentiments and modes of expression, on the subject of the security of dead Christians, as reserved in the hands, and under the protection of Christ unto a glorious resurrection, from the words of Christ himself, John vi. 39: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day;" and chap. x. 28, 29, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Hence we see the reason and propriety of dying Stephen's invocation, Acts vii. 59, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Upon the whole, by *being with Christ*, the apostle seems to me to mean being in a state of security with him, under the protection of Divine power, and the sanction of his faithful promise, reserved as a trust or deposit committed to him both by God and ourselves, in order to be restored to life, and made completely happy by him at the resurrection of the just.]

## SECTION V.

### *Of the Future Condition of the World in general.*

THE great events of the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, and a state of retribution afterwards, are such as all mankind are most nearly interested in, as *individuals*. But there are, likewise, other *intermediate events*, which are foretold with sufficient clearness in the Scriptures, in which we are interested as *members of civil societies*, or, at least, as well-wishers to the cause of Christianity and

virtue in the world. Of these I shall briefly mention a few that are the most considerable.

The power of *Antichrist*, mentioned by different names in several parts of the Scriptures, by which almost all interpreters understand the usurpations of the Pope of Rome, is to be finally overthrown. Several different steps are to be taken in order to the reduction of this enormous power, as is most probably the meaning of the *seven vials*, which are said, in the book of Revelation, to be poured, in succession, upon the *beast*, which is synonymous to Antichrist. And since it is evident, from the state of the world, that the Papal power has long been upon the decline, we may conclude, that several of these vials are already poured out.

But the utter destruction of Antichrist seems to be reserved for a more remarkable period, which is often denominated in the Scriptures by *the coming of Christ*, as was also, perhaps, the period in which Jerusalem was destroyed; so that probably this coming also will not be a literal one, but figurative, representing a most eminent judicial proceeding, in the exertion of that *power in heaven and in earth*, which was given to Christ after his resurrection. The apostle says, of this *man of sin* (by which there can be no doubt of the same Antichristian power being intended), that “the Lord shall consume *him* with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy *him* with the brightness of his coming.” 2 Thess. ii. 8.

The same coming of Christ seems to be described by the apostle John, in the book of the Revelation, in such a manner as to lead us to conclude, that the powers of this world will make a violent, but ineffectual opposition to this event; and that, when it has taken place, Christianity, then restored to a state of great purity, by the destruction of the power which had introduced and supported the corruptions of it, will prevail through the whole world, for a space which, in the prophetic language, is called *a thousand years*.

Nothing less than this can be denoted by the reign of Christ upon earth, and the resurrection of the martyrs, and others who opposed the antichristian corruptions of the gospel, to live and reign with him, in the following passage; Rev. xix. 11—20, xx. 1—6: “And I saw heaven opened, and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge, and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself: And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called, The Word of

God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.—And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together, to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.—And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled : and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them : and judgment was given unto them : and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands : and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Some have supposed that Christ himself will reign in person upon earth, and that the martyrs will actually rise from the dead and live with him ; but, considering the figurative language of prophecy, it is more probable, that the revival of the *cause* for which they suffered is, in reality, the thing denoted by it. Besides, it is contrary to the clear sense of many passages of Scripture, that any persons, however distinguished by their virtues, or sufferings, should receive their reward before the great day of judgment, after the general resurrection. Dr. Whitby has also advanced other very sufficient arguments against the literal interpretation of the Millenium, which was adopted by some of the ancients, and, with some variations, hath been patronized by several

modern divines, especially Mr. Joseph Mede\* and Bishop Newton.

The circumstance which makes this passage look the most like the literal description of an event is its being said, that "the rest of the dead shall not live again till those thousand years be ended." But if the resurrection of the martyrs may only denote the revival of their *cause*, the *rest of the dead* may signify their enemies, and their resurrection may denote the recovery of their power also.

As a *day*, in the prophetical language, is generally, and I think very justly, supposed to stand for a *year*, I do not see why we should not follow the same rule in the interpretation of these thousand years; as it seems to me that nothing but the very great length of that period has induced interpreters to acquiesce in the literal sense. But it should be considered, in favour of the figurative interpretation, that, with respect to knowledge, and improvements of all kinds, the world is yet but in its infancy, and will probably continue to be so, several centuries more. Even the extent of it is not yet known; the greatest part, and perhaps the very best part of it, is yet in a manner uninhabited; and far the greatest part absolutely uncivilized: not to say that even the best-policed states abound with so many absurd institutions, by which *the many* are miserably enslaved by *the few* (which is so unfavourable to the happiness of the whole), that, compared with what human society is naturally capable of, they hardly deserve to be termed better than barbarous.

Now, if we consider how very slowly mankind has advanced in political, and all kinds of improvements, how gradual has been the progress of all discoveries in science, and of excellence in the arts, we can hardly imagine (though this progress be evidently more rapid at present than it has been in any former age of the world, and though there is no reason to apprehend any more great interruptions in valuable improvements, and therefore we may expect them to go on with an accelerated progress) that a thousand years can be sufficient to bring the present system of the world, and the present race of mankind, to any thing like what may be called their *mature state*; and till this be attained, it cannot but appear improbable, that an end should be put to their existence. And, allowing a period of *manhood*, in proportion to this long *infancy* of the human species, three hundred and sixty thousand years will not be deemed a disproportioned age of the world.

As to the fabulous tradition of the Jews, that the world is to continue seven thousand years, viz. four thousand before the Messiah, two thousand more before the Millenium, and one thousand afterwards, which seems to have weighed much with Bishop Newton and others ; besides, that it cannot be pretended to have any other than Rabbinical authority, it appears, upon the very face of it, so very idle and chimerical, that I wonder it should have met with any regard from Christians.

That the Jews shall return to their own country, about the time of the commencement of the Millenium—that they shall possess it many years in peace, and be a very flourishing nation, seem to be most distinctly foretold in many prophecies of the Old Testament, which plainly refer to a return of this people, after a much longer and more complete dispersion of them than that which attended the Babylonish captivity. Besides, several of these prophecies were delivered after their return from Babylon, and therefore must refer to another return, subsequent to it, and which therefore has not yet taken place. Also the restoration of the ten tribes of Israel is spoken of, as well as that of Judah ; and the ten tribes cannot be said to have returned from captivity at all, yet. In proof of this I shall recite a few of the more express of these prophecies, by which it will also appear, that this nation is still to be distinguished by God, and to be the medium of his communications to the rest of the world.

Jer. xxx. 3 : “ For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” Ver. 10, 11 : “ Therefore, fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord, neither be dismayed, O Israel ; for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee : though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee : but I will correct thee in measure.”

The calamities of the Jewish nation are to bear but a small proportion to their prosperity after their return from their last captivity, with respect to its greatness or duration, as we may infer from Isa. liv. 7, 8 : “ For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a mo-

ment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." If there be any truth in this representation, what we call the *Millenium* must be of much more than a thousand years' duration; for the desolation of Judea has now continued more than one thousand seven hundred years. For this period to appear wholly insignificant, as we are here taught to conclude it will be, with respect to the flourishing state of that country, the latter must be of great extent indeed.

Zechariah, who wrote after the return of the Jews from Babylon, distinctly points out the same event, intimating, with many other prophets, that it will be attended with great calamities to those nations who shall oppose the settlement of the Jews in their own country, and also that they will bitterly repent of their sin in murdering Christ.

Zech. xii. 6—10: "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, in her own place.—And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon *him*\* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

Daniel also distinctly foretells the same event, and he seems to connect it with the destruction of a power, which, from his description of its rise and progress, most interpreters conclude must mean the Turkish, which has so long been in possession of the Holy Land. Whenever, therefore, this signal event shall take place (which is likewise, probably, denoted by the pouring out of the sixth vial in the book of the Revelation) we may be looking forward for some other very great and glorious events, but which will be preceded by some very calamitous ones, respecting almost all the known world, as the following prophecy, together with others in the Revelation, plainly intimates.

Dan. xi. 40—45, xii. 1: "And at the time of the end, shall the king of the south (the Saracens) push at him (the

\* For the authority of this reading, see *Mr. Eyre's Observations on the Prophecies relating to the Restoration of the Jews.* P.

Roman empire), and the king of the north (the Turks) shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships, and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. But tidings out of the east, and out of the north, shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain: yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

That great calamitous events await the present governments of Europe, seems to be sufficiently evident without a spirit of prophecy. "The state of Europe," as Dr. Hartley observes, is so particularly "critical and alarming, that hardly any thing less than universal confusion must be the consequence; and, if famine and pestilence should accompany civil commotions, it will indeed be a time of trouble, as Daniel says, such as was never known before."\*

The present kingdoms of Europe are unquestionably represented by the feet and toes of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his prophetic dream; and upon the feet of this image will fall the stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, which represents the kingdom to be set up by Christ, and which, after dashing in pieces the whole image, will itself become a great mountain, filling the whole earth. From Daniel's interpretation of this vision it may be clearly inferred, that the forms of government, ecclesiastical and civil, which now subsist in Europe, must be dissolved; but that something very different from them, and greatly superior to them, more favourable to the virtue and

\* See his "Observations on Man," II. p. 455. P. Google

happiness of mankind, will take place in their stead.\* That this is the meaning of the prophecy can hardly be doubted by any person who shall give the least attention to it. Dan. ii. 44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

When the prophetical thousand years above-mentioned shall be expired, we are informed, by the same spirit of prophecy, that there will be another prevalence of infidelity and wickedness, which will bring on the last crisis and final dissolution of the world. The following is the prophetical description of this great event. Rev. xx. 7—13, xxi. 1: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations, which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to his works.—And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

\* See a curious and interesting Note on this subject by Dr. Price, in his "Dissertations"—*On Providence*, 4th Ed. pp. 137, 188. Also "Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature and Providence." By Wallace, 1761. Pp. 1—105. See also Mon. Repos. II. p. 517.

## APPENDIX.

### SECTION I.

#### *Of other Intelligent Beings besides Man.*

WE learn from the Scriptures, that other intelligent beings, besides men, have had occasional intercourse with this world. *Angels* are particularly spoken of as the messengers of God to the patriarchs and prophets, and are also said to have been the instruments which he has employed in the distribution of his blessings or judgments. Thus, an angel was sent to rescue Lot, Gen. xix., and to announce the birth of Samson, Judges xiii. One whose name we are told is *Michael*, is said, Dan. x. 13, to be "one of the chief princes;" and, chap. xii. 1, "the great prince which standeth for the children of *Israel*." The same is called the *archangel*, Jude 9. Another, whose name is called *Gabriel*, interpreted two visions to the prophet Daniel, chap. viii. 16, ix. 21. The same also appeared to Mary, to announce to her the conception of Jesus.

What rank these beings hold with respect to intellectual power, is altogether unknown to us; for we can by no means infer, from their being immediately employed by God, that they are naturally endued with any extraordinary share of understanding. This, at least, we are not led to infer, from the choice which God has thought proper to make of prophets of the human race. Indeed, his own wisdom was often rendered the more conspicuous by their weakness. Nor is their employment an absolute proof of superior goodness.

It must be allowed, however, that, considering angels as being in a higher, and ourselves in a lower station, it was not unnatural to imagine, that they were much superior to

us in power, wisdom, virtue and happiness.\* Accordingly, we find the woman who applied to Joab, 2 Sam. xiv. 17, 20, speaking of angels as possessed of extraordinary wisdom, "to know all things that are in the earth;" and having the most perfect discernment of characters: and Achish, a king of the Philistines, 1 Sam. xxix. 9, compares the innocence of David to that of an angel. Also David himself speaks of the "angels that *excel in strength*," Psalm ciii. 20.

If it be true, that some of these angels have sinned, so as to have been cast out of heaven, and to continue still abandoned to impiety, making it their business to seduce mankind, and taking pleasure in doing them all kinds of injury (though, not knowing their situation, we cannot judge completely of their temptation, yet) we can hardly imagine, that they could have had much greater strength of mind than men are generally possessed of, or have had originally a disposition more favourable to virtue.

This fall of angels, I must own, however, appears to me to be very problematical; and though it cannot be said that the thing is absolutely impossible, it seems upon the face of it, to be very improbable.† Besides, if such exalted beings as these are supposed to have sinned, and have thereby become obnoxious to the Divine displeasure, what end could it answer to them to be assiduous in seducing mankind? Indeed, upon the supposition that their existence and torments were to be everlasting, it may be con-

\* Dr. Coward says, "that man, in the ordinary course of Providence, must wait until the last trumpet summons him out of the grave." He proceeds to conjecture that, "where just men in a more eminent degree and peculiar manner enjoyed the favour of God Almighty in this world there has been an immediate conveyance of them to heaven, either by translation (as *Enoch* and *Elijah*) or by quickening them before a general resurrection, as a mark of God's peculiar favour or some special signal to demonstrate his omnipotent power upon some particular occasion more than ordinary." *Second Thoughts*, pp. 332, 333. In another part of his works that author supposes that such favoured *just men*, were the *angels* of the Scripture. Dr. Bekker concludes, as to the "three persons which appeared to Abraham," and "two others that appeared to Lot—that those angels, that is to say, those messengers were men, as they named themselves." *World Bewitched*. Translated from *Le Monde Enchanté*, 1695. *Abridgment*.

† See the Author's *Notes* on 2 Peter ii. 4, and Jude 6. In the former he recommends "An Attempt to prove the fallen Angels to have been only the Sons of Seth." By *Anglo-Scotus*, in Theol. Repos. V. p. 166. The writer was the Rev. T. F. Palmer, formerly Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, who, on his return from an unmerited exile in 1801, was shipwrecked at Golam, one of the *Ladrones*, where he was imprisoned by the Spaniards and died of a fever. *Ille febilior occidit, nulli febilior quam mihi*. Scot sa. s. of the *angels* in Jude and Peter, "manie divines saie, that they find not anie where, that God made divels of them, or that they became the princes of the world, or else of the aire; but rather prisoners." *A Discourse of Divels and Spirits*, 1584. Ch. xi.

ceived to give them a gloomy kind of satisfaction, to have *brethren in iniquity* for their companions in their sufferings. But this idea of never-ending punishment, respecting any order of beings, as well as men, has, I apprehend, been shewn to be unreasonable and absurd.

The language of the Scriptures is often highly figurative, which may account for the unknown *principle* or *source of evil*, being personified in them, so as to be called *Satan* in Hebrew, and *Devil*, *Διαβολος*, in Greek; but whatever is actually ascribed to this being, will appear, if we consider the circumstances of the several narrations, to be derived from nothing but the irregular passions of men, which are, of themselves, a cause abundantly adequate to the effect.

Indeed, the manner in which the sacred writers speak of the vices of those men, who are said to have been actuated by this evil principle, plainly enough intimates, that they did not, in reality, consider their guilt as shared with them by any other being who prompted and seduced them. Nay, the very contrary doctrine is strongly asserted by the apostle James, who says, chap. i. 14, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." When our Lord said to Peter, on his suggesting that his sufferings were unworthy of him, Matt. xvi. 23, "Get thee behind me, Satan," the very indignation with which he spake, shews that he conceived the suggestion to have arisen only from Peter himself, who, in this case, was his Satan or adversary, as opposing the great purposes which were to be answered by his death. And, surely, the strong affection which Peter appears to have had for Jesus, joined with the narrowness of his views, may easily be supposed to account for his language. In like manner, all that may really be meant by Jesus being *tempted of the Devil*, Matt. iv. may be, that the improper thoughts mentioned in the course of the narrative, either occurred to himself in his private meditations, or were suggested by some other person.\*

\* Besides *Farmer* and other authors who will readily occur to the reader's recollection, the anonymous author of *The Doctrine of Devils*, 1676, appears to have well understood this subject. In his *Epistle to the Reader*, he complains of those who "by their comments" on the narrative "subject Christ to the Devil's insolency" to be carried "from desert to pinnacle, from pinnacle to peak, and from peak to desert again." This author was a determined foe of *Socinians* and a firm assertor of the *Godhead* of Christ, against which he held the common notion of diabolical agency to be the worst heresy.

When Satan is said to have stirred up David to number the people of Israel, 1 Chron. xxi. 1, the thought may, in fact, have arisen from his own pride only, which being evil, is therefore ascribed to Satan; and it is remarkable, that the very same scheme is by another historian, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, ascribed to God, because the purposes of his providence were finally answered by it. So also an *evil spirit from the Lord*, which is said to have troubled Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. 14, was probably nothing but his own melancholy, or ill-humour, which was relieved by music.

All that may be meant by the "everlasting fire" being "prepared for the devil and his angels," Matt. xxv. 41, may be, that this punishment was originally appointed for the destruction of all evil, and the instruments of evil; nor can this language, with this construction, be said to be more figurative than that of John, who says, that "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx. 14.

As to the *demoniacs* mentioned in the New Testament, it is pretty evident, that their disorder was some species of madness, or lunacy, which, in the time of our Saviour, was usually ascribed, by Heathens as well as Jews, to the malignant influence, not of the *devil*, but of *demons*, or the souls of evil disposed persons, which were imagined to range about the earth, and to delight in mischief; an absurd and unphilosophical notion, but which it was not our Saviour's business to correct.\*

The only story of this kind which is not pretty easy to be explained by this hypothesis, is that in which a *legion of demons* is said to have gone out of two men into a herd of swine, Matt. viii. 28. Mark v. 1. Luke viii. 26. But if the swine only happened to be drowned about the same time that the two men were cured, it might have been sufficient to give rise to the story; which, it is to be observed, is not related by any person who was present at the transaction, Matthew not being called to follow Christ till after his return from this excursion beyond the sea of Galilee; so that there was sufficient room for exaggeration and mistake. Or, which I think most probable, the madness of these men might be transferred to the swine.†

Much mistake, with respect to this subject, seems to have been occasioned by the ambiguity in the meaning of

\* See the work mentioned in the last note. That author, in a rather singular style, has anticipated much of what has since appeared against the reality of *possessions* and the vulgar notions of *witchcraft*.

† See Lardner's *Discourses on the Demoniacs*, D. i. Works, I. pp. 434—444.

the words *satan*, *angel*\* and *devil*, which signify respectively, *adversary*, *messenger* and *accuser*. Thus the *angels that sinned*, 2 Peter ii. 4, and Jude 6, may mean the messengers who were sent from the wilderness to spy out the land of Canaan, as the author of *the Scripture meaning of the word Satan* has ingeniously conjectured, or it may refer to his history of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, for their rebellion against Moses, were destroyed by the earth opening and swallowing them up. Indeed, the common interpretation of these passages is not agreeable to the constant tenour of the Scriptures, in which no more than *one devil*, or *Satan*, is ever mentioned.

When *the devil* is said to go about "as a roaring lion—seeking whom he may devour," 1 Pet. v. 8, the best interpreters suppose that Nero, or some other known adversary, or accuser, is intended. Also, when St. Paul says, that he desired to do a certain thing "once and again, but Satan hindered *him*," 1 Thess. ii. 10, he might mean any human adversary, or some of his friends, influenced by worldly considerations.

These are only a few general hints upon the subject, nor do I know that any of them are peculiar to myself; but they appear to me to throw considerable light upon the subject, and to remove some difficulties from the scheme of revelation, which I hope, will recommend them to others as well as to myself.

## SECTION II.

### *Of Abstinence from Blood.*

THE question concerning the lawfulness of eating blood, ought to have been considered under the head of precepts that are not of a moral nature; but, as it is a subject of much less importance than the rest, and of a more doubtful nature, I have thought proper to reserve the discussion of it to this Appendix, in which I shall endeavour to do justice to the arguments on both sides.

The prohibition to eat blood, given to Noah, seems to be obligatory on all his posterity; and as it accompanied the first express grant of animal food, it seems to be reserved, by way of acknowledgment to God, as the giver of life, and of the

\* It is not unusual with the sacred writers to call even the unconscious instruments of God's pleasure, such as natural causes, &c. *angels*. Ps. civ. 43. "Who maketh the wind his angels, and flaming fire his ministers." For so it may with most propriety be rendered. P.

food which supports it. Also this respect paid to blood, which is shed when animals are killed for food, and which is the most apparent *vehicle of life*, may be intended to inculcate a respect for *life*, as the most valuable gift of God, and to warn us not to deprive any animal of it, and much less man, without necessity.

It is observable, that the awful denunciation of the judgment of God against murder, immediately follows the prohibition to eat blood, as if it had been understood that they had some connexion. Gen. ix. 3—6: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things; but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it; and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man."

It may likewise be added, as an additional argument for abstaining from blood, that it is far from being a wholesome aliment, especially in hot countries, promoting leprous and scorbutic disorders.\*

Some have argued, that the precept given to Noah, was only intended to prohibit the eating of the flesh of animals raw, or cut off without killing the animal; but the ancient Jews understood it differently; and when Moses repeats the injunction to the Jews in particular, (where it cannot but be acknowledged that he intended to express a prohibition of the use of blood itself,) he gives precisely the same reason for it as in this case. Lev. xvii. 14: "Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof." It is most probable, therefore, that the two commands differ only in terms, and that they have both the very same meaning.

It might have been imagined that, by Christianity, the Gentiles, at least, had been exempted from the observance of this precept; but among other things which were before held innocent or indifferent by them, but which were proper to be observed after their conversion to Christianity, the

\* What Dr. Lardner says upon this subject is pretty remarkable. "Blood appears to me to be very unwholesome. Indeed, I esteem it filthy, and highly disagreeable. So that I cannot bear the thought of eating it. If ever it comes to me in food, it is more than I know. And I suppose it is never brought, either alone, or mixed with other things, to the table of polite people." Remarks on Ward's Dissertation, p. 132. P. Works, XI. p. 330. See also on the Apostolic Decree, Acts xv. the French writer mentioned p. 183. *Seconde Lettre*, p. 344.

apostles expressly included this, when they were solemnly assembled in council, in order to write to the disciples at Antioch, who had applied to them about their obligation to observe the laws of Moses. And though it is not expressly said, that they were particularly directed by God to decide in this manner, yet it seems to be implied, when they say, that *it seemed good to the Holy Ghost*, as well as to themselves, Acts xv. 28: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which, if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well."

It is said by some, and especially Dr. Lardner, that this was only a temporary provision, designed to prevent giving offence to the Jews; but, in answer to this, it may be said, that there is no intimation, or hint, of its being temporary, or any mention made of a time when the prohibition was to cease; and the apostle John wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, when it cannot be pretended that there was any necessity for observing so much tenderness with respect to the Jews.

Moreover, it is not impossible, but that our Lord himself might refer to this decree of the apostles, and thereby give his sanction to it, when, in his message to the church at Thyatira, he says, Rev. ii. 24, 25, "I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." No moral precept is ever properly called a burden in the Scriptures; and, therefore, they are probably some observances of a ceremonial nature, that are referred to; and the very same word, *βαρος*, *burden*, is made use of, both by the apostles, and by our Lord on this occasion.\*

It may seem extraordinary, that the prohibition of *fornication* should be joined to that of eating blood, in the same decree; but it should be considered, that fornication was not thought to be an immorality by the Gentiles; and even the Jews had not the same ideas of chastity and purity in this respect, which are enjoined upon Christians. Dr.

\* It appears to me rather extraordinary, that Dr. Lardner should be of opinion, that our Lord refers to this apostolical decree in the Revelation, which he supposes to have been written in the year 95 or 96, a long time after the destruction of Jerusalem, and yet that it should have been intended to continue in force only till *his religion had made greater progress in the world*; as if that was the meaning of *his coming*: whereas, I do not think, that any thing else in the language of the New Testament would lead us to conclude, that this phrase was applicable to any other than some determinate event, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem, or the time of the final judgment. See Remarks on Ward's Dissertations, p. 122. P. Works, XI. p. 325.

Lardner supposes that, by fornication in the apostolical decree, we are to understand marriage with Heathens, from which the apostle Paul so earnestly dissuades the Christians at Corinth.

Dr. Lardner also supposes, that "this decree is not to be understood as a precept or commandment, but as delivering advice and counsel, concerning some matters of prudence and expedience, considering the circumstances of things and persons at that time."\* But it cannot be denied, that it becomes all Christians to yield to such advice and counsel, if it extend to them. And if, as he allows, it did extend to Christians after the destruction of Jerusalem, I do not see that there is not equal reason why it should extend to us. And *one* of the reasons for abstaining from blood, which was hinted at when the prohibition was given to Noah, is of as much weight now as ever it was.

It has been urged as an argument against the perpetuity of the apostolical decree in the Acts, that the apostle Paul never quotes or alludes to it in his writings. But, admitting it to be temporary, no person will maintain that it was not designed to extend beyond the time of his Epistles; and yet, though the unlawfulness of *fornication* be allowed to be perpetual, Paul did not avail himself of any argument drawn from that decree when he wrote on that subject to the Corinthians, who, of all the Greeks, were most remarkably addicted to that vice.

If we interpret this prohibition of the apostles by the practice of the primitive Christians, who can hardly be supposed not to have rightly understood the nature and extent of it, we cannot but conclude, that it was intended to be absolute and perpetual; for blood was not eaten by any Christians for many centuries. When the Christians were charged with meeting in the night, and drinking blood, by way of binding one another to secrecy, in some immoral practices, Tertullian observes, with respect to it, that it was well known that no Christian would eat blood at all; inso-much, that it was usual with Heathens, when they wanted to know whether any person was a Christian, to set blood-puddings before him, as a very sufficient test.

Blood is not eaten by Christians in any part of the East, or by the Greeks or Russians, who are of the Greek church, to this day; nor indeed was the use of blood introduced into this western part of the world till very late. When

the Pomeranians were converted to Christianity, which was in 1120, they were particularly enjoined to abstain from blood, as a badge of their profession. It was not allowed to be eaten in the West in the time of Bede, or a century afterwards; and blood was not eaten in any part of Switzerland till Calvin introduced the practice from some other place. See *Curcellæus* on this subject. Dr. Lardner, however, says, that little regard was paid to these regulations of the apostolical decree by the Latin Christians, from the end of the fourth century.\*

It is farther said, that the *liberal spirit* of Christians is strongly against any such a distinction of meats as the prohibition of the use of blood supposes; and that even the very *letter* of the declaration of our Lord and his apostles excludes any such distinction. Thus we read, Matt. xv. 11, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." And the apostle Paul represents him who *believeth that he may eat all things*, as not *weak*, but as of a stronger and more enlarged mind than he who thought and acted differently, Rom. xiv. 1. He also says, ver. 17, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and, ver. 20, "All things indeed are pure: but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence."

But our Saviour made the declaration above-mentioned, at a time when he himself strictly conformed even to the Jewish distinction of meats; and Paul might only allude to the same restrictions, to which, as well as to other Jewish rites, many Christians then conformed. The same apostle, in the same general manner, makes light of all distinction of *days*, though he, no doubt, made a distinction of one day of rest.

Though, in discussing this subject, I have generally mentioned the arguments *for* the prohibition of blood before those *against* it, and have replied to the latter more than to the former, I would not have my reader conclude, that I am fully determined in my judgment with respect to it. Let him weigh what has been advanced on both sides, and decide for himself; not forgetting, that this question relates to the least of all positive precepts, and that all positive or ceremonial precepts are of little importance compared to the smallest moral duty.

\* Remarks on Ward's Dissertations, p. 136. Works, XI. p. 332. Google

# TWO TRACTS.

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## I.

### AN APPEAL

TO THE

**Serious and Candid Professors of Christianity,**

*ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS, VIZ.*

1. THE USE OF REASON IN MATTERS OF RELIGION,
2. THE POWER OF MAN TO DO THE WILL OF GOD,
3. ORIGINAL SIN,
4. ELECTION AND REPROBATION,
5. THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST, AND
6. ATONEMENT FOR SIN BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

*To which are added,*

**A CONCISE HISTORY OF THOSE DOCTRINES,**

AND

**THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH,**

BEING

**An Account of the Trial of Mr. Elwall, for Heresy and Blasphemy.**

## II.

**A FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION OF CERTAIN  
PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.**

*[From the Edition of 1791.]*



**AN APPEAL**  
TO THE  
**SERIOUS AND CANDID**  
**PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY.**

[*First published in 1770.*]

**MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,**

**P**ERMIT one who professes obedience to the same Lord, and faith in the precious promises of the same gospel with yourselves, to address himself to you with all freedom and plainness of speech, on subjects relating to our common salvation. I need not tell you that the subjects are interesting. In reality nothing else is interesting, in comparison with them. For what is this world compared with the future? What is time compared with eternity? Believe me, my brethren, it is nothing but the deepest concern for the honour of a religion which is the most valuable inheritance of the human race, and which sets us above all the follies and vices, all the weaknesses and troubles of life, by giving us the most solid hope in death, that has induced me to solicit your attention. But I am confident that you will not think it ill-bestowed, because it is upon a subject that is near and dear to you, and the consideration of which cannot but please and profit you.

If, by the blessing of God upon our common endeavours to *lead* and to *be led into all truth*, I shall be so happy as to bring you to entertain the same views of these things with myself, we shall rejoice together; and if, after all that I may be able to advance, you should still think differently from me, I trust you will, at least, be disposed to think with more candour of some of your fellow-christians, who love the gospel, and are zealous for its honour, though you may think them mistaken in their conceptions concerning it. Let me intreat you therefore, my brethren, to give me a patient and candid hearing. Attend, in the spirit of meekness, to what I shall say from the earnestness of my heart; and exercise the reason which God has given you, upon this occasion, which is the noblest on which it can be exercised, and for which you may, therefore, conclude, that it was principally given you.

## I. *Of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion.*

Be not backward, or afraid, my brethren, to make use of your reason in matters of religion, or where the Scriptures are concerned. They both of them proceed from the same God and Father of us all, who is the giver of every good and every perfect gift. They cannot, therefore, be contrary to one another, but must mutually illustrate and enforce one another. Besides, how can we distinguish one scheme of religion from another, so as to give the preference to that which is the most deserving of it, but by the help of our reason and understanding? What would you yourselves say to a Mahometan, whom you would persuade to abandon the imposture of Mahomet, and embrace Christianity, but bid him use his reason, and judge by the help of it, of the manifest difference between the two religions, and the great superiority of yours to his? Does not God himself appeal to the reason of man, when he condescends to ask us, "Whether his ways be not equal?" Ezek. xviii. 29. Does not the apostle exhort us that, "in understanding we be men"? 1 Cor. xiv 20. Are we not expressly commanded to "prove all things," and then "hold fast that which is good"? 1 Thess. v. 21. Also when we are commanded to "search the Scriptures," John v. 39, more must be meant than merely *reading* them, or *receiving implicitly*, the interpretations of others. *Searching* must imply an earnest endeavour to find out for ourselves, and to understand the truths contained in the Scriptures; and what faculty can we employ for this purpose, but that which is commonly called *reason*, whereby we are capable of thinking, reflecting, comparing, and judging of things?

Distrust, therefore, all those who decry human reason, and who require you to abandon it, wherever religion is concerned. When once they have gained this point with you, they can lead you whither they please, and impose upon you every absurdity which their sinister views may make it expedient for them that you should embrace. A Popish priest would require nothing more than this, to make you believe the doctrine of transubstantiation, and that a man is infallible; or to persuade you to commit the most flagrant wickedness, as a means of *doing God service* \*.

\* This harsh imputation on a Popish priest, like the passage p. 40, must have escaped the author *currente calamo*, or rather under the influence of that prejudice, which even generally enlightened Protestants once indulged and excited. The

For the first of these articles they do not fail to urge the words of Scripture, which expressly say, concerning the bread that is used in the Lord's Supper, that it *is the body of Christ*, Matt. xxvi. 26; and there is no possibility of replying to them, but by appealing to reason, as the necessary and proper judge of the sense of Scripture. The Papist, therefore, as might well be expected, is forward, on all occasions, to vilify human reason, and require men to abandon it; but true Protestants will not part with it. It is by the help of reason, in conjunction with the Scriptures, that we guard ourselves against the gross delusions of the Papists, who, after relinquishing reason, have been *made to believe a lie*; and by the diligent and continued use of the same power, let us endeavour to combat every remaining error, and trace out and reform every corruption of Christianity, till we hold the *pure truth as it is in Jesus*, and *obey it in the love thereof*.

Do not think that, by recommending the use of reason, I am about to decry the Scriptures. My appeal shall be to both, upon every subject on which I address you; and I think you cannot but see that the plainest and most obvious sense of the Scriptures is in favour of those doctrines which are most agreeable to reason. A good man will rejoice to see them thus go hand in hand, mutually illustrating and enforcing one another.

## II. *Of the Power of Man to do the Will of God.*

One of the subjects with respect to which I earnestly wish that you would attend to the voice of reason and the Scriptures, and with respect to which one mistake will be followed by many others, and mistakes of great consequence, is concerning *the power of man to do the will of God*. It is a favourite opinion with many teachers of religion, that men have *naturally* (or by that constitution and frame which God their Maker hath given them) no power at all to do any thing that is good, not even to think a good thought, much less actually to obey any of the commands of God; so that, if men were left to themselves, they could do nothing but sin, and must be under a necessity of aggravating their condemnation, by every thought, word and action

reader may observe, the spirit which pervades Dr. Blackburne's *Considerations*, 1768, designed to oppose the toleration of Papists. Dr. Priestley lived to express, as one of the last employments of his pen, his high regard for a Catholic priest. See the *Dedication of Heathen Philosophy compared with Revelation*, 1804.

of their lives. But, my brethren, how does this doctrine agree with the Scriptures, and particularly with the manner in which the Divine Being constantly expostulates with the sinful sons of men ; as when he says to the Jews, " Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?" Ezek. xxiii. 11. " Wash ye, make you clean. — Cease to do evil, learn to do well" ? &c. &c. &c. Isa. i. 16, 17.

Is it not plain from this, that it depends upon men themselves, whether they will repent and turn to God or not ? And how can it depend upon themselves, if they have not, naturally, a sufficient power to do it ? You cannot think that God would command, and expect obedience, when he had not given power to obey ; and much less that he would urge men to provide for their own safety and happiness, when himself had put an effectual bar in the way of it.

Suppose that any man's children were shut up in a building that was on fire, while he himself was without, and had the key ; and that, instead of opening the door, to favour their escape, he should only call out to them to flee out of the place, in order to avoid instant destruction ; and that, as the necessary consequence of this, they should all perish in the flames before his eyes ; what would you think of such a father ? You would want words to express your abhorrence of his cruelty ; and yet in this very light do many Christian divines represent the conduct of that God *whose tender mercies are over all his works*, and who has solemnly declared, " that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his way and live," Ezek. xxxiii. 11 ; yea, " who will have all men to be saved." 1 Tim. ii. 4.

The conduct of our *merciful God and Father* is certainly far different from this, and more agreeable to reason and equity. If he designed us to be accountable creatures, and treats us as such, we must have *talents* given us, which we may either improve, or misimprove. If we be the subjects of his *moral government*, we must be in a condition either to *observe* or to *break* his laws. A power to do the one necessarily supposes a power to do the other ; and without this power we should not be the proper subjects of religion ; as, in that case, it would be in vain to propose to us either rewards for obedience, or punishments for disobedience.

Nor is the supposition of a power in man to do the will of God, any foundation for *pride*. For we must still say with the apostle, " What have we that we have not re-

ceived ; and how then can we glory, as if we had not received it ? Every good and every perfect gift comes from God ;” and knowing this, the more we receive of his bounty, the more thankful and the more humble we should be. I shall, certainly, be more solicitous to exert myself in doing the will of God, when I believe that I have a talent to improve, than if I believe that I have no talent entrusted with me at all ; so that I cannot do even so much as the “ wicked and slothful servant, who hid his talent in a napkin.”

Some of those persons who believe that all mankind are absolutely incapable of doing good, are sometimes heard to invite sinners of all kinds to come to Christ, *as they are*, and to say, that the viler they are, the more welcome they will be to him ; as if he was, after this, to cleanse them by some miraculous power. But, my brethren, the invitation of the gospel runs in very different terms. It is, Repent and “ bring forth—fruits meet for repentance.” Matt. iii. 8. “ Repent and be converted—that your sins may be blotted out.” Acts iii. 19. And none are invited to come to Christ, but those who “ labour and are heavy-laden ;” nor can they “ find rest” for their souls, till they have actually learned of him to be “ meek and lowly in heart.” Matt. xi. 28.

What can be more contrary to the maxims above-mentioned, than the whole tenour of that serious expostulation with the children of Israel in the prophet Isaiah, part of which I quoted above ? “ Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now (and not before) and let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Isa. i. 16—18.

Others, who entertain the same opinion of the utter inability of man to do the will of God, act more consistently with those sentiments, but far more inconsistently with the Scriptures, in never preaching to sinners at all, \* though to call sinners to repentance was the chief end of Christ’s coming into the world. Matt. ix. 13.

Whatever represents a state of acceptance with God, as a thing that may be brought about without any efforts of our

\* Mr. Hussey, formerly of Cambridge, wrote *God’s Operations of Grace*, but no *Offers of Grace*. See Robinson’s *Claude*, 1770. I. p. 327. Note.

own, and especially if it may be done in a moment, or in a very short space of time, is sure to be a popular doctrine. Mankind in general care not how little is expected of them, or how little they themselves have to do, in order to get to heaven. But true religion, that alone which affords solid ground of hope towards God, consists in a change of heart, affections and habits; which can only be brought about by serious resolution, and a vigorous and constant exertion of our powers. Nay, unless a course of virtue be begun, and good habits formed early in life, there is very great danger that the *thorns, briars* or *bad soil*, will prevent the good seed from ever coming to maturity.

To believe, as the same persons do, that faith and repentance are nothing that we ourselves are capable of, but altogether the miraculous operation of the Spirit of God in us and upon us, supposes that this great and sudden change may as well take place at the *last* hour of life, as at any other: which certainly encourages the most unwarrantable and most dangerous presumption, and is far from having any countenance in the Scriptures. The word of God always represents a safe and *happy death* as the consequence of nothing but a good and *well-spent life*. Some, indeed, are said to have been called at the *eleventh* hour, but none at the *twelfth*, when the time for labouring in the vineyard was quite over; and not one of the foolish virgins, who had neglected to provide themselves with oil, was admitted to the marriage-supper.

### III. Of Original Sin.

As a foundation for this strange doctrine, of the utter inability of men to do what God requires of them, a doctrine so injurious both to our Maker and ourselves, it is said that by his first offence our first parent, Adam, and all his posterity, lost all power of doing any thing acceptable to God for the future; that he was the representative of all his posterity, so that when he sinned, we all sinned; and every sin being an offence against an infinite God, we all became, from that moment, liable to an infinite punishment, even the everlasting wrath and curse of our Maker. And they say, that, on this account only, it would have been just in God to have made us all suffer the most exquisite and endless torments in hell, even though we had never sinned in our own persons.

But, my brethren, you find nothing like any part of this

in your Bibles. For there you read, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. xviii. 4. And long after the transgression of Adam, and to this very day, God is continually calling upon men to "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well;" which certainly supposes that men always have had, and that we now have, a power to do so. It is allowed that we *suffer* by the sin of Adam, as any child may suffer in consequence of the wickedness of his ancestor; but it is not possible that we should have *sinned* in him. Wherever there is *sin*, there is *guilt*; that is, something that may be the foundation of *remorse* of conscience; something that a man may be *sorry for*, and *repent of*; something that he may wish he had not done; all which clearly implies, that sin is something that a man has given his *consent* to, and therefore must be convinced of the reasonableness of his being punished for. But how can any man repent of the sin of Adam, or feel any thing like remorse of conscience for it; when he cannot but know that he never gave his consent to it, and could not possibly have been, in the least degree, accessory to it? Good and bad conduct are, in their own nature, personal, and cannot possibly be transferred from one to another. Whatever some divines pretend, nothing of this kind can be *imputed* in this sense of the word. We may receive harm by means of one person, and benefit by means of another; but no sin of the former, or righteousness of the latter, can be considered as ours, in the eye of an equitable and just God. The contrary is as much the language and the plain meaning of the Scriptures throughout, as it is agreeable to the common sense and reason that God has given us.

#### IV. Of Election and Reprobation.

Supposing that all mankind became liable to the everlasting wrath and curse of God for the sin of one man, some divines say, that it was mercy in God to save any, though by an *arbitrary decree*, which left all the rest of the human race under an inevitable necessity of perishing. But certainly, my brethren, such *tender mercy is cruelty*. All the creatures of God must look up to him as the author of their being, since it was, undoubtedly, in his power to give or to withhold it, at his pleasure; and, surely, a good and merciful God would have put a stop to the propagation of such a race of creatures, rather than suffer them to be born in such shocking circumstances; in which he infallibly fore-

saw, that the greatest part of them must be exposed to, and even actually suffer remediless destruction. As surely as I derive my being from a just and merciful God, I conclude that the terms on which I came into the world are advantageous to me; and, therefore, that it must be my own fault only, if I have not reason to rejoice in it, and to be thankful for it. But, indeed, I can hardly think that any man seriously believes, that the greatest part of his fellow-creatures are born into the world under a predetermined necessity of being for ever miserable. For, in that case, it must appear probable, that any children which he himself may be the means of bringing into the world will be for ever miserable; and surely no man of real goodness or compassion would wish to have children, or be accessory to their being born in such circumstances.

If this doctrine be true, what motive can any man have to endeavour to "flee from the wrath to come," Matt. iii. 7; when, if it is to be his lot at all, nothing that he can do will enable him to escape it; or what motive can a man have to exert himself to "lay hold on eternal life," 1 Tim. vi. 19; when, if he is to enjoy it at all, he cannot possibly miss of it, or of any thing belonging to it, or that is necessary to prepare him for it? What reason had the apostle Paul to exhort Christians to "take heed lest they should fall," 1 Cor. x. 12, when none that ever did stand could possibly fall? And what reason had he to "labour, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away," 1 Cor. ix. 27, when, being certain of his conversion, he must have known that that consequence was impossible?

This doctrine, of absolute election and reprobation, is certainly a doctrine of *licentiousness*, and not a *doctrine according to godliness*; and, let divines employ all the ingenuity they are masters of, it is impossible for them to clear this opinion from being the cause of fatal despair in some, and as fatal a security in others. If this opinion were true, and men were really aware of their situation, I should think it impossible to prevent their falling into absolute distraction, through terror and anxiety. It would be like a man having his *all*, his *life*, nay, infinitely more than his life, depending upon the cast of a die; the decree of God being a thing that he has as little power to command. Besides, this doctrine certainly represents the God and Father of us all in such a light, as no man would choose that he himself should appear in.

### V. Of the Divinity of Christ.

So fatal have the consequences of the sin of Adam been represented, that you have been told that nothing but the blood of God himself could reverse them; and therefore you have been taught to believe, that Jesus Christ, whose proper title is *the Son of Man*, as well as *the Son of God*, was not merely *man*, but very and eternal *God* himself; without considering that, by thus making more Gods than one, you are guilty of a breach of the first and most important of all the commandments, which says expressly, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." *Exod. xx. 3.* But whatever such divines may say, the apostle Paul says, in direct contradiction to them, that "to us there is but one God, the *Father*, of whom are all things;—and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." *1 Cor. viii. 6.* And again, after saying that we have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," he adds, "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." *Eph. iv. 5, 6.* The creed of all Christians, therefore, ought to be, "There is *one God*, and one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus." *1 Tim. ii. 5.*

The *Father* is frequently styled *God*, even with respect to Christ, as well as other beings. "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory—give unto you—that ye may know—the exceeding greatness of his power—which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand," &c. *Eph. i. 17—23.* Christ himself uses the same language: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." *John xx. 17.* "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" *Matt. xxvii. 46.*

Christ, who was "the image of the invisible God," and the *first-born* (or *most excellent*) of every creature, *Col. i. 15,* and in whom dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," *Col. ii. 9,* acknowledged that his Father was *greater* than he, *John xiv. 28;* and, indeed, upon all occasions, and in the clearest terms, he expressed his dependence upon God his Father, for all his power and glory; as if he had purposely intended to guard his disciples against forming too high an opinion of the dignity of their Master. "Verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself." *John v. 19,* "I can of mine ownself do nothing. As I hear I

judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." v. 30. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." xiv. 10. "I live by the Father." vi. 57. "The Father—hath given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment." v. 26, 27. "All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth." Matt. xxviii. 18. He even calls his Father *the only true God*. John xvii. 3: "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It appears to me not to be in the power of language to exclude the idea of the Divinity of Christ more expressly than by these solemn words.

Notwithstanding the divine communications with which our Lord was favoured, some things are expressly said to be withheld from him. For he himself, speaking of his second coming, says, Mark xiii. 32, "But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." In Matt. xxiv. 36, where the same observation is repeated, it is, "but my Father only."

The apostles, notwithstanding their attachment to their Lord and Master, always preserve the idea of his subordination to the Father, and consider all his honour and power as derived from him. "He received from God the Father, honour and glory." 2 Pet. i. 17. "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." Col. i. 19. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." Rev. i. 1. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." 1 Cor. iii. 23. "The head of Christ is God." 1 Cor. xi. 3.

The reason why Christ was so much distinguished by God the Father, is frequently and fully expressed in the Scriptures, viz. his obedience to the will of God, and especially in his submitting to die for the benefit of mankind. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." John x. 17. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth;—and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 8—11. "Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. xii. 2.

Our Lord says, that *he and his Father are one*, John x. 30 ; but he sufficiently explains himself, when he prays that all his disciples may be *one with him, and his Father, even as they are one*, John xvii. 11 ; and *he gives them the same glory which God had given to him*, ver. 22. Besides, at the very time that our Lord says, that he and his Father are one, and in the very sentence preceding it, ver. 29, he says, that *his Father is greater than all*. But how could the Father be greater than all, if there was any other, who was so much *one* with him, as to be, in all respects, *equal* to him?

The mere term *God* is, indeed, sometimes used in a lower and inferior sense in the Scriptures, denoting *dominion* only ; as when the Divine Being himself says, that he will make Moses "a god to Pharaoh," Exod. vii. 1 ; but, surely, there can be no danger of our mistaking the sense of such phrases as these ; or if it were possible, our Lord himself has sufficiently guarded against any misconstruction of them when applied to himself, by the explanation he has given of them ; informing us, that, if in the language of Scripture, they are called "gods unto whom the word of God came," John x. 35, (though, in fact, they were no other than mere men,) he could not be guilty of blasphemy in calling himself only *the Son of God*. Now if Christ had been conscious to himself that he was the *true and very God*, and that it was of the utmost consequence to mankind that they should regard him in that light, this was certainly a proper time for him to have declared himself, and not to have put his hearers off with such an apology as this.

But even this power and dominion, to which Christ is advanced by God his Father, who gave all power into his hands, and who "gave him to be the head over all things to the church," Eph. i. 22, this *mediatorial kingdom* of Christ (as it is sometimes, and with sufficient propriety, termed) is not to be perpetual. For the apostle Paul, speaking, no doubt, under immediate inspiration, expressly says, that when the end shall come, that God shall have subdued all things to his Son (in which he observes, that He must be excepted who did subdue all things unto him) he must deliver up the kingdom to God, even the *Father*, and be himself subject to him who had "put all things under him, that God may be all in all." 1 Cor. xv. 24—28. Nay, he himself says expressly, that he had not the disposal of the highest offices of his kingdom, Matt. xx. 23 : "To sit on

my right hand and on my left is not mine to give ;\* but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

So clear, my brethren, so full, and so express, is the uniform testimony of the Scriptures to the great doctrine of the proper *unity of God*, and of the subordination of Christ, and all other beings to him, that the prevalence of so impious a doctrine, as the contrary must be, can be ascribed to nothing but to that *mystery of iniquity*, which, though it *began to work* in the times of the apostles themselves, was not then risen to so enormous a height as to attack the supremacy of the *one living and true God*, and *give his peculiar glory to another*. This, my brethren, among other shocking corruptions of genuine Christianity, grew up with the system of Popery ;† and to shew that nothing is impossible to the superstition and credulity of men, when they are *become vain in their imaginations*, after exalting a man into a god, a creature into a creator, they made a piece of bread into one also, and then bowed down to, and worshipped, the work of their own hands.

But though it seemed fit to the unsearchable wisdom of God, that all the errors and abuses of Popery should not be reformed at once ; and though this great error was left untouched by the first Reformers, blessed be God the Bible is as open to us as it was to them ; and by the exertion of the same judgment and spirit, we may free Christianity from the corruptions which they left adhering to it ; and then, among other excellencies of our religion, our Lord will be one "and his name one." Zech. xiv. 9.

If you ask *who*, then, is Jesus Christ, if he be not God ; I answer, in these words of Peter, addressed to the Jews, after his resurrection and ascension, that "Jesus of Nazareth" was "a man approved of God—by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him." Acts ii. 22. If you ask what is meant by *man*, in this place ; I answer, that *man*, if the word be used with any kind of propriety, must mean the same kind of being with yourselves. I say, moreover, with the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, that "it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things—to make the captain of *our* salvation" in all respects, "like

\* Doddridge thus amends the text, "by partial friendship, or to the first and most impertunate asker." See other instances of that Expositor's management, p. 196, Note.

† If by *Popery* be understood the paramount authority of the Roman see, this corruption had become full-grown before its establishment.

unto us his brethren," that he might be made "perfect through sufferings," Heb. ii. 10, 17, and that he might have a "feeling of all our infirmities," iv. 15. For this reason it was that our Saviour and deliverer was not made of the nature of an *angel*, or like any super-angelic being, but was of "the seed of Abraham," ii. 16, that is (exclusive of the divinity of the Father, which resided in him, and acted by him) a mere *man*, as other Jews, and as we ourselves also are.

Christ being made by the immediate hand of God, and not born in the usual course of generation,\* is no reason for his not being considered as a man. For then Adam must not have been a man. But in the ideas of Paul, both *the first and second Adam* (as Christ, on this account, is sometimes called) were equally men: "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead:" 1 Cor. xv. 21. And, certainly, in the resurrection of a *man*, that is, of a person in all respects like ourselves, we have a more *lively hope* of our own resurrection; that of Christ being both a *proof* and a *pattern* of ours. We can, therefore, more firmly believe, that *because he lives*, we, who are the same that he was, and who shall undergo the same change by death that he did, "shall live also." John xiv. 19.

Till this great corruption of Christianity be removed, it will be in vain to preach the gospel to Jews, or Mahometans, or, indeed, to any people who retain the use of the reason and understanding that God has given them.† For how is it possible that *three* persons, *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, should be separately, each of them, possessed of all Divine perfections, so as to be *true*, *very*, and *eternal* God, and yet that there should be but *one God*; a truth which is so clearly and fully revealed, that it is not possible for men to refuse their assent to it; or else it would, no doubt, have been long ago expunged from our creed, as utterly irreconcilable with the more favourite doctrine of a *Trinity*, a term which is not to be found in the Scriptures. Things *above* our reason may, for any thing that we know to the contrary, be true; but things expressly *contrary* to our reason, as that *three* should be *one*, and *one three*, can never appear to us to be so.

\* An opinion which the Author saw reason to correct. See pp. 178 & 180, Notes.

† See *Conferences of "one of the Danish Missionaries."* I, with "a Mahometan Priest;" 2, with a "learned Malabarian Physician." *Thirty-four Conferences*, "translated out of High Dutch," 1716, pp. 23, 127—130.

With the Jews, the doctrine of the Divine Unity is, and indeed justly, considered as the most fundamental principle of all religion. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord;" Deut. vi. 4. Mark xii. 29. To preach the doctrine of the Trinity to the Jews, can appear to them in no other light, than an attempt to seduce them into *idolatry*, a thing which they dare not entertain the most distant thought-of.

The great creed of the Mahometans is, that *there is one God, and Mahomet is his prophet*. Now that Mahomet is not the prophet of God, it is to be hoped they may in time be made to believe; but we must not expect that they will so easily give up their faith in the unity of God. To make the gospel, what it was originally, *glad tidings of great joy*;" and as at last it certainly will be to all the nations of the world, we must free it from this most absurd and impious doctrine, and also from many other corruptions which have been introduced into it. It can no otherwise appear worthy of God, and favourable to the virtue and happiness of mankind.

Lest some common objections should hinder the reception of the great truth here contended for, I shall briefly consider and reply to the principal of them. It is often said that Christ speaks of his *humanity* only, whenever he represents himself as inferior to the Father, and dependent upon him. But the Scriptures themselves are far from furnishing the least hint of any such method of interpretation, though, according to the Trinitarians, it is absolutely necessary to the true understanding of them.

Besides, when it is applied to the passages in question, it is far from making them either true in themselves, or agreeable to the obvious purport and design of the places in which they are introduced. I shall just mention a few. Could our Lord say with truth, and without an unworthy prevarication, that the Father is "the only true God," John xvii. 3, if any other person, not implied in the term *Father*, was as much the true God as himself? Now the term *Father* being appropriated to what is called the *first* person in the godhead, cannot comprehend the *Son*, who is called the *second*. This key, therefore, is of no service in this case, and our Lord, by expressing himself as he has done, could not but lead his hearers into what is called a dangerous mistake.

When our Lord said that his Father was greater than he, did he make any reserve, and secretly mean, not his *whole*

*self*, but only *part*, and the inferior part of himself, the other part being equal in power and glory with the Father? How mean the prevarication, and how unworthy of our Lord!

When our Lord said that the time of the day of judgment was not known to himself, "the Son," but to "the Father only," could he mean that his *humanity* only did not know it, but that his *divinity* (which is supposed to be intimately united with his humanity) was as well acquainted with it as "the Father" himself? If the human nature of Christ had been incapable of having that knowledge communicated to it, the declaration would have been needless: but as that was not the case, his hearers must necessarily understand him as speaking of himself in his highest capacity; as he certainly must do, if at all, when he speaks of himself as "the Son," corresponding to "the Father."

If Christ had not satisfied the Jews that he did not mean to make himself equal with God, would they not have produced it against him at his trial, when he was condemned as a blasphemer, because he confessed that he was the Christ only: and yet no Jew expected any thing more than a man for their Messiah, and our Saviour nowhere intimates that they were mistaken in that expectation. It is plain that Martha considered our Lord as a different person from God, and dependent upon God, when she said to him, John xi. 22, "I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

## VI. Of Atonement for Sin by the Death of Christ.

You have been taught by divines, that if Christ be not God, he could not have made an infinite satisfaction for the

\* See the Author's *Notes* on Mark xiii. 32. Doddridge thus paraphrases the words: "Nor even the Son of Man himself, with respect to his human nature, or as a part of what he is commissioned to reveal." Sect. 102. Thus "the Trinitarian" steps in with his ambidextrous distinctions and reservations, and tells us with a wonderful complacency, that as *God*, Jesus *knew all things*, and as *man*, was ignorant of some things; that is, was *all-wise* and *ignorant* at the same time—*God* and not *man*, *man* and not *God*, just as the argument requires, and difficulties press." Wakefield's *Matthew*, on xxiv. 36, p. 344. Mr. W. in another place complains that "this particular of our Lord's ignorance, which he mentions of himself, is very improperly omitted by Bishop Newcome in his *Observations*, Pt. i. C. 1, S. 2;" and quotes this contrast from an early Father—*Scientiam dei illius filius non erubuit referre ad Patrem: sed dixit quod verum est. Iren. II. 48.* Wakefield's "*Enquiry, &c. concerning the Person of Jesus Christ*," 1784, p. 63. A very learned Trinitarian, who declined to avail himself on this occasion of the *hypothesis* of two natures, has endeavoured to shew, even on this passage, "the omniscience of the Son of God." See "A Discourse," thus entitled, "upon St. Mark xiii. 32, by W. Wotton, D. D." 1720.

sins of mankind. But, my brethren, where do you learn that the pardon of sin, in a finite creature, requires an infinite satisfaction ; or, indeed, any satisfaction at all, besides repentance and reformation, on the part of a sinner ? We read in the Scriptures that we are “ justified freely ” by the grace of God, Rom. iii. 24 ; but what free grace, or mercy, does there appear to have been in God, if Christ gave a full price for our justification, and bore the infinite weight of Divine wrath on our account ? We are commanded to forgive others, as we ourselves hope to be forgiven, Matt. vi. 14, and to “ be merciful, as our Father who is in heaven, is also merciful,” Luke vi. 36. But surely we are not thereby authorized to insist upon any atonement, or satisfaction, before we give up our resentment towards an offending and penitent brother. Indeed, how could it deserve the name of forgiveness if we did ? If he only repents, we are commanded to forgive him, Luke xvii. 4.

You read in the Scriptures that Christ died a “ sacrifice for our sins,” Heb. ix. 26. So he did, and “ a sacrifice ” it was “ to God, for a sweet smelling savour,” Ephes. v. 2. To die, as Christ did, in the glorious cause of truth and virtue ; to die, as he did, in order to shew as an example of patiently suffering death for our religion, and the good of mankind, and in a firm hope of a resurrection to a future and eternal life ; to die, as he did, in express attestation of his own divine mission, by his manifest resurrection from the dead, and as the fullest proof of that doctrine, by means of which sinners are continually reconciled unto God, was a noble sacrifice indeed. We also are commanded “ to present our bodies a living sacrifice,” Rom. xii. 1. And we are required to “ offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually,” Heb. xiii. 15. But it is plain that all these are only figurative expressions, and used by way of comparison. Neither our bodies, nor our prayers, can be considered as real sacrifices ; nor are we, therefore, obliged to suppose that Christ was a real sacrifice. And though we, like him, should be called actually “ to lay down our lives for our brethren,” 1 John iii. 16, which, in imitation of him, we are enjoined to be ready to do, we should be sacrifices only in the figurative sense of the word.

It is true, that no man who is a sinner (and all men have sinned) can be justified by his works. We all stand in need of, and must have recourse to, free grace and mercy ; but it is a great dishonour to God to suppose that this mercy and grace takes its rise from any thing but his own essential

goodness; and that he is not of himself, and independent of all foreign considerations whatever, what he solemnly declared himself unto Moses, at the time of the giving of the law, to be, namely, a "God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth," Exod. xxxiv. 6; or that he requires any other sacrifices, than the sacrifices of "a broken spirit—and a contrite heart," which he will "not despise." Ps. li. 17.

Can we wish for a more distinct and perfect representation of the manner in which God forgives the sins of his offspring of mankind, than our Saviour has exhibited to us in that most excellent parable of the *prodigal son*; in which the good father no sooner sees his child, who had abandoned him, and wasted his substance in riotous living, returning to him and to his duty; but without waiting for any atonement or propitiation, even "when he was yet a great way off, he ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him"? Luke xv. 20. The same representation we see in the parable of the creditor, who freely forgave his servant, because he humbly desired him. Let us not then, my brethren, deprive the ever-blessed God of the most glorious and honourable of all his attributes, and leave him nothing but justice, or rather vengeance, which is expressly said to be "his strange work." Isa. xxviii. 21.

It is impossible to reconcile the doctrine of the satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ, with the doctrine of free grace, which, according to the uniform tenour of the Scriptures, is so fully displayed in the pardon of sin, and the justification of sinners. When, therefore, the apostle says, Rom. iii. 24, that we are "justified freely" by the grace of God, "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ," the latter clause must be interpreted in such a manner as to make it consistent with the former; and it is far from requiring any force or straining of the text to do it. For it is only necessary to suppose that our redemption (or, as the word properly signifies, and is indeed frequently rendered by our translators, our deliverance) from the power of sin, i. e. our repentance and reformation, without which there is no promise of pardon, is effected by the gospel of Jesus Christ, who came to call "sinners to repentance;" but still God is to be considered as the giver, and not the receiver, with respect to our redemption; for we read that he "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Rom. viii. 32.

To say that God the Father provided an atonement for his own offended justice, is in fact, to give up the doctrine. If a person owe me a sum of money, and I choose to have the debt discharged, is it not the same thing, whether I remit the debt at once, or supply another person with money wherewith to pay me in the debtor's name? If satisfaction be made to any purpose, it must be in some manner, in which the offender may be a sufferer, and the offended person a gainer; but it can never be reconciled to equity, or answer any good purpose whatever, to make the innocent suffer the punishment of the guilty. If, as Abraham says, it be far from God "to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked," Gen. xviii. 25, much farther must it be from him to slay the righteous instead of the wicked.

I wish the zealous advocates for this doctrine would consider, that if it be necessary, in the nature of things, that the justice of God be satisfied before any sin can be pardoned, and Christ be God as well as the Father, whether the justice of Christ ought not to have been satisfied in the first place. If so, what other Infinite Being has made satisfaction to him? But if the divine nature of the Son required no satisfaction, why should the Divine nature of the Father require any?

If it had been inconsistent with the divine justice to pardon sin upon repentance only, without some farther satisfaction, we might have expected to have found it expressly said to be so in the Scriptures; but no such declaration can be produced either from the Old or the New Testament. All that can be pretended is, that it may be inferred from it. Though good works are recommended to us in the strongest manner, it is never with any salvo or caution, as if they were not *of themselves* acceptable to God. The declarations of the Divine mercy to the penitent are all absolute, without the most distant hint of their having a reference to any consideration on which they are made. "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive," Psalm lxxxvi. 5. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him," Dan. ix. 9. When David and other penitents confess their sins, and entreat for pardon, they refer themselves to the Divine mercy only, without seeming to have the least idea of any thing farther. "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord." Psalm xxv. 7.

It is particularly remarkable, that when sacrifices under the law are expressly said not be sufficient for the pardon of sin, we are never referred to any *more availing* sacrifice; but to good works only. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm li. 16, 17. If any of the Jews had had the least notion of the necessity of any atonement for the sins of mankind, they could not but have expected a suffering Messiah; and yet it is plain that the very best of them had no such idea. And though our Saviour frequently explains the reason of his coming, and the necessity of his suffering, it is never on any such account. If he had done it any where, it might have been expected in those discourses by which he endeavoured to reconcile his disciples to his death, in his solemn prayer before his sufferings, at the time of his agony in the garden, or when he was upon the cross; yet nothing of this kind drops from him on any of these occasions.

When our Lord describes the proceedings of the day of judgment, he doth not represent the righteous as referring themselves to the sufferings or merit of their Judge for their justification; and the Judge himself expressly grounds it on their good works only. Though Peter, in his discourse to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, speaks of their sin in murdering Christ as of a heinous nature, he says not a word of the necessity of any atonement, or that an ample satisfaction had just been made, by means of their very wickedness. How would a modern divine have harangued upon the occasion, and what advantage might he have taken of the cry of the Jews; "his blood be upon us, and upon our children!" But Peter only exhorts to repentance, and speaks of the death of Christ as an event that took place according to the fore-knowledge of God.

All the discourses of Paul upon various occasions in the book of Acts are entirely moral. In his celebrated speech at Athens, he only urges his hearers to repentance, from the consideration of a future judgment. He says not a word of what is now called the true gospel of Jesus Christ. In short, it is only from the literal interpretation of a few figurative expressions in the Scriptures, that this doctrine of atonement, as well as that of transubstantiation, has been derived; and it is certainly a doctrine highly injurious to God: and if we, who are commanded to imitate God, should act upon the maxims of it, it would be subversive

of the most amiable part of virtue in men. We should be implacable and unmerciful, insisting upon the uttermost farthing.

These my brethren, are the principal heads on which I proposed to expostulate with you, in the plain and free manner in which I have done. Do you yourselves, "search the Scriptures," and *see whether these things be so*. Pray to the God of truth to lead you into all truth, and may he give you "understanding in all things."

## VII. *Practical Consequences of the above Doctrines.*

The sound knowledge of Christianity is not of importance as a matter of speculation merely; though abstract truths, especially truths that relate to God, and the maxims of his moral government, are not without their utility and obligation: but the truths that I here contend for, nearly affect the sentiments of our hearts, and our conduct in life; as indeed has been shewn in many respects already. Considering God as possessed of the character in which some divines represent him, it is impossible, while human nature is what it is, that he should appear in an amiable or respectable light. Such a God may, indeed, be the object of dread and terror to his creatures; but by no means of their love or reverence. And what is obedience without love? It cannot be that of the heart, which, however, is the only thing that is of any real value in religion. Also, how can a man love his fellow-creatures in general, when he considers the greatest part of them as the objects of the Divine abhorrence, and doomed by him to an everlasting destruction, in which he believes that he himself must for ever rejoice? And what can remain of virtue, when these two great sources of it, the love of God and of mankind, are thus grossly corrupted? Lastly, how must the genuine spirit of mercy and forgiveness, which so eminently distinguishes the gospel of Christ, be debased, when God himself (whose conduct in this very respect is particularly proposed to our imitation) is considered as never forgiving sin without some previous atonement, satisfaction or intercession?

On the other hand, loving God, as the compassionate Father of all his offspring, as willing that "all men" should "be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth;" and also loving all mankind as our brethren, as, together with ourselves, the children of the same gracious Father, we cannot want the most generous and powerful motives to

do the will of God, and "to provoke one another unto love and to good works;" being in no fear of counteracting the secret designs of the Almighty, which we believe are aimed, not at the destruction, but the happiness of all his creatures.

Think not, however, that I am so uncharitable as to suppose that all those who profess to maintain the doctrines I have been arguing against, are universally destitute of the genuine love of God, or of their fellow-creatures. I am sensible, and truly thankful, that it is not always the consequence; but it is because the hearts of such persons are really influenced by better principles than those which they avow. They by no means habitually regard the Divine Being in the light in which their principles represent him, but as the true *Father* of all the creatures that he has made, and, as such, sincerely desirous to promote their best interests.

Also, notwithstanding, if they be asked, they will not hesitate to say that Christ is God, the supremacy of the Father, even with respect to the Son, is, at the same time, the real sentiment of their minds; and when they lift up their hearts to God, it is only "God the Father," that is the proper object of their adoration. The constant tenour of the Scriptures is so contrary to their professed creed, that though they dare not call it in question, it is not able to counteract the plainer, the more consistent, and the better principles which will force themselves upon their minds from conversing with the Bible.

Besides, it requires more subtlety and refinement to enter into the principles above-mentioned, than the common people are masters of. They cannot conceive how one man should sin, and another person, six thousand years after, be guilty of that sin, and punishable for it; how one person's righteousness should be considered as the righteousness of another; or that three distinct persons should each of them be God, and yet that there shall be no more Gods than one.

Men of plain understandings, in fact, never do believe any such thing; nor can it be supposed that the gospel, which was intended to be the solid foundation of the faith, hope and joy of common people, should require so much acuteness, as is necessary to give even a plausible colour to these strange assertions. The attempt to explain them (and till they be explained, they can no more be believed than a proposition in an unknown tongue) can lead to nothing but endless and unprofitable controversy. It is

happy, therefore, that so many persons make a better use of the gospel than their tenets would lead them to do, and that they consider it chiefly as a rule of life, and the foundation of hope after death. But, as far as the principles I have been arguing against are believed, they cannot but do harm to those who entertain them, as well as bring disgrace upon the Christian name; both which every lover of the gospel should endeavour to prevent.

## A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE ABOVE- MENTIONED DOCTRINES.

### I. *A Concise History of Opinions concerning Jesus Christ.*

YOU will say, if Christ be not really *God*, but merely a man, though inspired and assisted by God, how came the Christian world to fall into so great an error? In return, I might ask, how, if Christ be truly God, equal to the Father, so many Christians, and especially the Jewish Christians, and many others in the very early ages of the Christian church, came to think him to be merely a man; when it may be easily conceived that, on many accounts, Christians, who were continually reproached with the meanness of their Master, would be disposed to add to, rather than to take from his dignity? But it is not difficult to shew by what means, and by what steps, Christians came to think as the generality of them now do.

It was the universal opinion of philosophers, at the time of the promulgation of Christianity, that the souls of all men had existed before they were sent to animate the bodies that were provided for them here, and also that all souls were emanations, or parts detached from the Deity. For at that time there was no idea of any substance being properly immaterial and indivisible. When these philosophers became Christians, and yet were ashamed of being the disciples of a man who had been crucified, they naturally gave a distinguished rank to the soul of Christ before he came into the world. They even went one step farther, and maintained that Christ had a body in appearance only, and not in reality, and therefore that he suffered nothing at all when he was scourged and crucified.

This opinion the apostle John reprobrates with great

severity, and even calls it Antichristian, 1 John iv. 3; whereas, though it is acknowledged that the other opinion, viz. that of Christ being merely a man, existed in the time of the apostles, it is remarkable that this apostle takes no notice of it. It was plainly the doctrine of those only who maintained that Christ was not truly a man that gave this apostle any disturbance, or he would never have said as he does, 1 John iv. 2, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (that is, was truly a man,) is of God."

After this, philosophizing Christians began to add to the pre-existent dignity of Christ in another way, and at length, carried it much higher than those upon whom this apostle animadverted with so much severity. They said that Christ was originally in God, being his reason or *logos* which came out of him, and was personified before the creation of the world, in which he was the immediate agent; and that this new personage was henceforth the medium of all the Divine communications to mankind, having been the person who spake to Adam in paradise, to Noah, to Abraham, and all the patriarchs; who delivered the law from mount Sinai, and lastly inhabited the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

On this principle they explained many passages in the Old Testament, in which "the word of God" is spoken of, as that of the Psalmist, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," &c., making this word to be a person, distinct from God, whose word it was; whereas nothing can be more plain, than that by "the word of God" in this place is meant the *power* of God exerted with as much ease as men utter words.

These philosophizing Christians took great pains to explain how the reason or wisdom of God could thus become a person, distinct from God, and yet God continue a reasonable Being; but their account of it is too trifling to be recited in this place. However, it was far from being pretended, in general, that the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was such a mystery as could not be explained. For by mystery they only meant something of a solemn nature, which was unknown till it was revealed or explained. And indeed this is plainly the use of the word mystery in the New Testament; and it was also the usual meaning of the word when the present translation of the Bible was made; the mysteries of any particular trade being the secrets of that trade, which yet every master taught his apprentices.

In this state the doctrine continued till after the council of Nice in the year of our Lord 325; but in all this time a

real superiority was always acknowledged in the Father, as the only source of divinity; and it was even explicitly acknowledged that there was a time when the Son of God had no separate existence, being only the reason of God, just as the reason of man is a part, or a property of man. One of the most eminent of the Christian Fathers says, "There was a time when God was neither a Father, nor a Judge; for he could not be a Father before he had a son, nor a Judge before there was sin."

So far were they from supposing the Son of God to be equal to the Father, that when they were charged, as they frequently were, with making two Gods, they generally replied, that the Son was only "God of God," as having proceeded from a superior God, which is the language of the Nicene Creed; whereas the Father was God of himself, (*autotheos*) by which they meant underived, which they held to be the prerogative of the Father only.

In all this time the Jewish Christians, who were not tainted with the Heathen philosophy, maintained the doctrine of the proper and simple humanity of Christ. Athanasius himself was so far from being able to deny this, that he says all the Jews were so fully persuaded that their Messiah was to be a man like themselves, that the apostles were obliged to use great caution in divulging the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ. He says, that the reason why Peter, Acts ii. 22, only calls him "a man approved of God," and why, on other occasions in the course of that book and other parts of the New Testament, he is simply called a man, was, that at first the apostles did not think proper to do more than prove that Jesus was the Christ, or Messiah, and that they thought it prudent to divulge the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ by degrees. He likewise says, that the Jews of those times, meaning the Jewish Christians, being in this error themselves, drew the Gentiles into it. Athanasius greatly commends the apostles for this address in their circumstances.\* But what the apostles scrupled to teach, we should be scrupulous in believing. Chrysostom gives the same account of the situation of the apostles with respect to the Jews.

It also clearly appears from ecclesiastical history, that the unlearned among the Christians were exceedingly averse to the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, even in the qualified sense above-mentioned, opposing what they called, the

\* See the Author's "History of Early Opinions," B. iii. Ch. iv.

supreme *monarchy* of the Father, to the novel doctrine of the Divinity of the Son ; and the philosophizing Christians were obliged to make laboured apologies to these early Unitarians, acknowledging the perfect inferiority of the Son to the Father. But at length these Unitarians, who are expressly said to have been the majority of Christians in the third century, were overborne by the superior influence and popularity of their adversaries, who, from believing Christ to be God in an inferior, qualified sense of the word, came, in the natural course of things, to believe him to be God equal to the Father himself, and to have existed from all eternity independently of him. But it was several centuries before this doctrine was fully established. And the Holy Spirit was generally considered either as the same thing with the *power* of God, that is, God himself (just as the *spirit* of a man is a man) or else a superangelic being, inferior both to the Father and the Son, till after the council of Nice.

In the mean time, Arius and his followers, shocked at the doctrine of Christ being of *the same substance* with the Father, maintained that, though he had pre-existed, and had been the medium of all the dispensations of God to mankind, he was, like all other derived beings, created out of nothing ; the opinion of all souls having been emanations from the Supreme Mind, being then generally denied by Christians.

Thus did it please God, for reasons unknown to us, to permit the rise and general spread of the Trinitarian and Arian opinions, as he permitted the rise and amazing power of "the man of sin," and many corruptions and abuses of Christianity utterly subversive of the genuine purity of the gospel, till the full time for the reformation of this and other gross corruptions of Christianity was come.

## II. *A concise History of the Doctrines of Grace, Original Sin and Predestination.*

It was a controversy about the nature and use of baptism that occasioned the starting of the doctrine of the *natural impotence* of man to do what God requires of him, of the imputation of the sin of Adam to all his posterity, and of the arbitrary *predestination* of certain individuals of the human race to everlasting life, while the rest of mankind were left in a state of *reprobation* ; and this was so late as four hundred years after Christ. Before that time it had

been the universal opinion of Christians, and of Austin himself, who first advanced the doctrines above-mentioned, that every man has the power of obeying or disobeying the laws of God ; that all men may be saved if they will, and that no decrees of God will be the least obstruction in the way of any man's salvation.

But Pelagius,\* a man of good understanding, and exemplary morals, in his declamations against some abuses of baptism, asserting, that baptism itself does not wash away sin, as was then generally supposed (on which account it was the custom with many to defer it till near death) nor could have been appointed for that purpose, because infants, which have no sin, are baptized ; Austin, in opposition to him, maintained that, though infants have no *actual* sin of their own, they have the stain of *original* sin in which they were born ; though he was far from asserting that Adam was the federal head of all his posterity, and that his sin was properly imputed to them. This was an improvement upon the doctrine in after-ages. What Austin maintained was, that men derive a corrupt nature, or a proneness to sin, from Adam.

Also, having been led, in the course of this controversy, to assert, that by means of original sin, no man had it in his power to attain to salvation, he was obliged to maintain that it depended upon the will of God only, who should be finally saved, and that he predestinated whom he thought proper for that purpose, independently of any foresight of their good works, which it was not in their power to perform without his immediate assistance, and in which he must be the first mover.

But, notwithstanding this doctrine of the corruption of human nature, the necessity of divine grace for the production of every good thought or action, and the predestination to eternal life without regard to good works, advanced by Austin, prevailed in the West, chiefly through the authority of his name ; it was never received in the Eastern church, and was much controverted, and held with various modifications, in the Western. Also together with this doctrine of grace, the divines of the Roman-catholic church held the doctrine of human merit, founded on the right use of the grace of God to man. And the present doctrines of *grace*, *original sin* and *predestination*, were never maintained

\* A native of Britain, who, after having passed his life chiefly at Rome, and in Palestine, is supposed to have died in his native country about 430.

in their full extent till after the reformation by Luther, who was a friar of the order of Austin, had been much attached to his doctrines, and made great use of them in opposing the Popish doctrines of *indulgence*, founded on that of *merit*.

### III. *A concise History of the Doctrine of Atonement.*

The doctrine of *atonement*, or of the necessity of *satisfaction* being made to the justice of God by the death of Christ, in order to his remitting the sins of men, arose from an abuse of the figurative language of Scripture, as the doctrine of *transubstantiation* also did. But for several centuries these figurative expressions were understood and applied in a manner very different from what they now are.

It was granted by some pretty early writers, that we were "bought (or redeemed) with a price;" but then, as we had been the slaves of sin, and were redeemed by God, who ransomed us by the death of his Son, it was maintained till after the time of Austin (the principal author of all the rigid doctrines that are now called *Calvinistic*) that the price of our redemption was paid not to God, but by God to the Devil, in whose power we were. Of this opinion was Austin himself, who wrote largely on the subject in his treatise on the doctrine of the Trinity. It was long after his time before we find any traces of its being generally thought that the price of redemption was paid to the offended justice of God: and the present doctrine of atonement, founded on the idea of the absolute necessity of an infinite satisfaction being made by one Infinite Being for offences of an infinite magnitude, as committed against another Infinite Being, is subsequent to the Reformation. This doctrine was advanced by the Reformers in the course of their controversy with the Papists, about the doctrine of human merit, works of penance, and the power of granting indulgences. Now, can it be supposed that a doctrine of so much importance as this is always represented to be, should have been unknown so many ages?

Thus all these boasted ancient doctrines are in fact of late date, either having arisen from the principles of heathen philosophy, or having been started and extended in the course of controversy, one false position making another necessary for its support; and an air of awful and deep mystery has been no small recommendation of them to many of the more ignorant.

The doctrine of the *Trinity*, having been one of the earliest corruptions of Christianity, will probably be one of the last to be completely eradicated. But the time, I trust, is fast approaching, when, by means of the zeal of truly enlightened and good men in this great cause, this fundamental error, which gives such great and just cause of offence to Jews and Mahometans, will be removed, and all that has been built upon it will fall to the ground.

### *The Conclusion.*

My Christian brethren, if the reading of this address give rise to any doubts or scruples in your minds, with respect to some doctrines which you have been used to consider as true and fundamental in the Christian religion, inquire farther; and if you be satisfied that you have hitherto been mistaken, dare to avow the truth, and act consistently with it. Dread the consequences of joining with an enlightened mind in the idolatrous worship of any creature, though enjoined by any human authority; remembering the words of Christ, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Matt. iv. 10; and also that awful voice from heaven respecting all Antichristian corruptions of the gospel in mystical Babylon; "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Rev. xviii. 4.

Think not to avail yourselves of the wretched equivocation of many divines, who imagine that they may safely ascribe all divine honours to Jesus Christ, on account of his union with the Father, when they believe no more of his *proper divinity* than professed Arians or Socinians. By this artifice they secure the reputation of orthodoxy; but let them consider the value of the purchase, and the price they give for it. To mere worldly considerations, to the praise of men, or filthy lucre, they sacrifice that integrity, for the loss of which worlds cannot compensate.

The publisher of these tracts does not conceal his name through the fear of any thing that men can say of him, or do to him, but merely to give what he has written a better chance of being read without prejudice. What he has done is out of a sincere good-will and compassion to the multitude, who believe they know not what, or why, and, what is of more consequence, who "know not what spirit *they* are of;" but, instead of "speaking the truth in love," mistake bitterness and rancour for a zeal for God and his truth;

and also for the sake of a better sort of people, who are unhappily drawn into the same delusions.

Considering the deference which the common people always pay to the judgment of men of learning, there can be little doubt but that, if those persons who, having studied this subject, have been convinced that Christ is not God, and ought not to be worshipped as God, had openly avowed their opinion, and had had recourse to no mean subterfuge or equivocation, this fundamental article of true and rational Christianity had long ago been the prevailing belief; and our religion appearing more worthy of its Divine Author, there would have been, at this time, fewer unbelievers in all Christian countries, and many more converts made to it from other religions. And, compared with this glorious advantage, what has been gained by all the arts and sophistry of ministers, who have concealed their real meaning under ambiguous expressions, lest, as they pretend; they should too much shock the prejudices of their hearers?

That some regard should be paid to the prejudices of the weak is allowed; but let not this lead men to criminal dissimulation, or extend to things of so much importance as this, respecting the unity of God. In this case, let us keep at the greatest distance from every thing that is disingenuous; let the truth be spoken in the most explicit manner, and let the consequences be left to the power of truth, and the God of truth. Besides, it is impossible that while men retain depraved and unworthy notions of God, their devotion should be such as God requires; so that this pretended tenderness injures those who are the objects of it, as well as bears an unfavourable aspect on the interests of Christianity more at large. Such are the effects of "the wisdom of this world," when it is put in the place of sincerity, and a regard to the plain truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Professing the purity of the Christian faith, let us be careful, my brethren, to adorn it by a blameless and exemplary life. More especially let us beware that we do not wear "the form of godliness," when our hearts are destitute of the *power* of it; and that we indulge no secret hope, that, by any peculiar strictness and austerity of life, by frequent or long prayers, or by attending on much preaching, and using other means of religion, we shall atone for a neglect of "the weightier matters of the law, righteousness, mercy and truth." Let the integrity of our hearts appear in the cheerfulness of our countenances; and let us shew that we "love God whom we have not seen," by loving our brethren

whom we do see, and by being always ready to do them every kind office in our power.

To judge of our love to God, or of our love to Christ, directly, by what we *feel* when we think of them, especially when we are excluded from the world, as is the custom with many, is to expose ourselves to the grossest and most dangerous delusions. We find in the Scriptures a much plainer and safer method of judging in both these cases. "This," says the apostle John, "is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." "If ye love me," says our Lord, "keep my commandments. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you; *and* this is my commandment, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Remember that true Christian charity is humble, modest and diffident; and that he is pronounced to be happy, who "feareth always," so as to be circumspect in thought, word and deed; and that, for this purpose, we are to "put on the whole armour of God," that we may withstand the temptations of the world.

Rather than indulge a pharisaical pride, in recounting your *experiences*, boasting how vile you have once been, or thought yourselves to be, in order to make others believe how holy and sanctified you are now, content yourselves with the language and practice of the humble publican, who, speaking to God and his own heart only, cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Rejoice in all the real good you see done by others, whatever may be their ill-will, or opposition to you; and be especially upon your guard, lest your just aversion to what is corrupt in the principles or practices of others lead you to dislike what is good in them. Let not the *pharisaical rigour* of some throw you into the opposite extreme of *levity*; and let not their laying an undue stress upon praying, preaching, and other means of religion, make you neglect them, as we are too apt to do with respect to any thing that has been much abused.

Having enough to do with our own hearts, let us be particularly upon our guard against that spirit of *ensoriousness*, which many professing Christians indulge with too little restraint. Let us remember that the true Christian "beareth all things," and "hopeth all things;" and let us never forget the awful warning of our Lord, "Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge,

ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Be not moved, my brethren, by the rash censures and reproaches of others. *Persecution*, of some kind, is what "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus" must expect to *suffer* in this world. To their wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice, answer with "the wisdom that is from above;" which "is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated: full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Let us even rejoice that we are "counted worthy to suffer shame" and insult for the sake of Christ, though our sufferings come not from the professed enemies of Christ, but from false brethren; and let us not be concerned at being counted deceivers, if we be conscious to ourselves that we truly love the gospel, and that we labour to promote and adorn it.

You will be called *Arminians* and *Socinians* by your adversaries, or something else that shall express more of their hatred and dislike. But let not this offend you. If there be any proper meaning in those epithets, it can only be that you hold certain opinions which they deem to be false, but which you cherish as the only genuine doctrines of the gospel. If nothing more is meant by those terms, besides mere reproach and abuse, think yourselves happy, as being "reproached for the name of Christ:" 1 Peter iv. 14. With many the appellation of *Lutheran* or *Calvinist* is reproachful, and with many also that of *Christian* is much more so. Besides, both Arminius and Socinus were men who loved the gospel, and who suffered more for their adherence to it, than most others of the Reformers, especially Socinus.

If we be Christians indeed, we shall consider ourselves as "not of this world," but as citizens of heaven. "The friendship of this world," therefore, together with popularity, and success in it, ought not to be considered as any object for us. If we "abide in Christ," and "walk even as he also walked," not being "conformed to this world, but *being* transformed by the renewing of *our* minds," we are heirs of a far nobler inheritance, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us;" and "when Christ, who is our life," and for whom we suffer reproach, "shall appear, we also *shall* appear with him in glory."

I shall conclude this address with a word of advice and exhortation to all Unitarians, whether they be members of

the Established Church, or of any society of Dissenters in this country.

Of such great importance is the doctrine of the Divine Unity, that nothing will more fully justify a separation from any Christian church that does not openly profess it, and much more from those that avow the contrary doctrine, directing prayers, and paying supreme worship to any other than "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It was for the preservation of this great and fundamental doctrine, that Abraham, and his family by Isaac and Jacob, were separated from the rest of the world, and made a distinct people, as it were, to be the depositaries of the true religion, which consists principally in the sole worship of the one true and living God, the Maker and Preserver of all things. The same important doctrine was uniformly taught by Christ and the apostles; though Christians in after-times, like the Israelites after the time of Joshua, relapsed into that idolatry which has generally prevailed to this day.

If it was a sufficient justification of the first Reformers, that they considered the church from which they separated as worshipping saints and angels; will it not justify your separation from their partial reformati<sup>o</sup>ns, that you consider them as praying to and worshipping one whom you consider as a man like yourselves, though honoured and distinguished by God above all other men?

To join habitually in public worship with Trinitarians, is countenancing that worship, which you must consider as idolatrous; and which, however innocent in them, is highly criminal in you. If they think it a point of conscience not to go to mass in Popish countries, because, in their opinion, it is idolizing a piece of bread, you ought to make a point of conscience of not worshipping with them, because, in your opinion, it is idolizing a man, who is as much a creature of God as a piece of bread, and just as improper an object of worship.

Besides, the great offence to Jews, Mahometans, and the world at large, being the doctrine of the Trinity, it is highly necessary that societies of Christians should be formed expressly on this principle of the Divine Unity, that it may be evident to all the world, that there are Christians, and societies of Christians, who hold the doctrine of the Trinity in as much abhorrence as they themselves can do. For the conversion of Jews or Mahometans to Christianity, while it is supposed to contain the doctrine of the Trinity, no per-

son who knows, or has heard of Jews or Mahometans, can ever expect.

You will say we Unitarians are but few, even in large towns, and still fewer in villages, and there are no men of leisure or learning among us. But was not this the case with the primitive Christians, and yet this circumstance was no obstruction to the forming of a Christian church in any place? We read of churches in private houses.

Assemble together, therefore, in the name and in the fear of God, and according to the order of the gospel, every Lord's-day; if there be no more than two or three, or even a single family of you in a place, read the Scriptures and pray together. Also read sermons, or other works of moral instruction, of which there is happily no want at this day. Baptize, and administer the Lord's Supper among yourselves; and as you grow more numerous, form yourselves upon some regular plan of church-discipline, that it may be the means of uniting and keeping you together; and rigorously exclude all persons whose conduct would be a reproach to you.

As to a learned ministry, it is acknowledged to be desirable where it can be had, but it is by no means necessary. The gravest and most respectable persons among you, and those who have the most leisure, will, in the character of *elders*, select and read proper prayers and discourses, and perform all the offices of Christian societies, just as well as the elders in the primitive churches, who had no such helps as you now have; and marvellous powers were not of long continuance with them.

If you be at present members of the Established Church, you will find a reformed Liturgy ready prepared for your use by Mr. Lindsey.\* But if you should prefer the mode of worship among the Dissenters (but men of sense will not make much account of such distinctions), you may in many authors, especially at the end of Mr. Holland's Sermons, find forms of such prayers as you have been used to: or you may apply to Dissenting ministers of your acquaintance, who will cheerfully give you any assistance in their power.

All these are trifling obstacles to a great design. It requires, indeed, a proper degree of Christian zeal; but the object is worthy of it. The example has been already set in Scotland, where it was least of all to be expected; and

\* First published in 1774. See the Author's *Letter to a Layman*.

the success has been such as should abundantly encourage similar attempts in this country.\*

The Baptists and Methodists, not laying much stress upon a learned ministry, flourish greatly; the Independents are now taking the same methods, and with the same success; while the Rational Dissenters, fancying they would be disgraced by the want of a learned ministry, are dwindling away almost every where.

Whatever inconvenience may arise from mere novelty, it is soon over; and as the Methodists are collecting into bodies in all places, a thing of this kind will excite much less surprise. But what impression ought the censure of the world to make upon those who, as Christians, profess to be above the world, and to rejoice that they are "counted worthy to suffer shame" in the cause of Christ, and to think themselves happy if they be reproached on that account? You should imagine that you hear that awful voice from heaven, recorded in the book of Revelation, ch. xviii. 14, "Come out of her (i. e. mystical Babylon, the great source of all the corruptions of Christianity), my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Be careful, however, to do this in the spirit of Christian charity, which should be extended to all men, but especially to all that bear the Christian name. Consider them as men who are in an error, which is always involuntary. Endeavour to remove the prejudices they unhappily lie under, but forbear all angry reproaches, all insult, and even ridicule; for religion is a serious thing, and brotherly love is the very essence of it. And if this love is to be extended even to enemies, much more should it be indulged towards our merely mistaken friends.

The author of this address entirely approves of Mr. Lindsey's Liturgy, or that which was used at the Octagon Chapel in Liverpool; and he would recommend responses, especially to societies formed in this manner, in which it is particularly desirable, that the members, being nearly on a level, should each bear his part in the service. But lest some, from the force of habit, should not be able to reconcile themselves to the use of a Liturgy, and object to the scheme on that account, he has drawn up, and published a set of *Forms for all the Occasions of Unitarian Societies*.

\* The Author refers to the exertions of Mr. Christie, of Montrose, now of Philadelphia, who published "Discourses on the Divine Unity," and Mr. Millar of Dundee, where, in 1792, he was assisted by the Rev. T. F. Palmer. See Mem. of Lindsey, pp. 351, 352.

THE  
**TRIUMPH OF TRUTH;**  
 BEING AN ACCOUNT OF  
 THE TRIAL OF MR. ELWALL,  
 FOR  
 HERESY AND BLASPHEMY, AT STAFFORD ASSIZES.

[1796.]

—◆—  
 THE PREFACE.

THIS Trial is printed from the Author's Second Edition, even without altering such phrases as are peculiar to that denomination of Christians with whom he generally associated, and whose style he adopted; and certainly the Quakers ought to think themselves honoured even by this kind of relation to Mr. Elwall. Such firmness in the cause of truth, and such presence of mind in asserting and vindicating it, as appear in this Trial, are truly apostolical, and have had but few examples since the first promulgation of Christianity. It is impossible for an unprejudiced person to read this account of it, (which is written with so much true simplicity, perspicuity, and strength of evidence) without feeling the greatest veneration for the writer, the fullest conviction and love of the truth, and a proportional zeal in maintaining it. I should even think it impossible for the most prejudiced person to read it attentively, but, if he use no violence with his own mind, he will receive some favourable impressions both of the Author, and of that cause which he supports with such becoming dignity, and with a temper and disposition of mind, in every respect worthy of a true Christian.

So great was the force of truth on this memorable occasion, that a reputable and honest jury, directed by a good-natured

and sensible judge, acquitted the criminal, contrary to the express laws of this country,\* according to which this glorious man ought to have been sentenced to a severe punishment, as a convicted and avowed blasphemer. What must a lover of truth and of free inquiry, as subservient to truth, think of such laws, and of the ecclesiastical constitution of the countries in which they are in force !

It is to be wished that such a monument of the *triumph of truth* might be constantly held out to the view of all mankind, and particularly in this country where it was exhibited.

The dedication of the treatise, on account of which Mr. Elwall was prosecuted, is dated the eighth day of the second month, 1724 ; he speaks of his Trial in a treatise entitled, " A Declaration against all Kings and Temporal Powers under Heaven, shewing that they have no Authority over their Subjects in Spiritual Things ; but that Jesus alone is King in his Church ;" printed in 1732 : and Judge Denton, before whom he was tried, went the Oxford circuit in 1726 and 1728. From these circumstances it may be concluded, that the former of these years is the date of this remarkable Trial, especially as in some part of the same year, 1726, Mr. Elwall published another defence of the Unitarian system, in a treatise which he entitled " Dagon fallen before the Ark of God, or the Inventions of Men not able to stand before the first Commandment, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*, with the case of the Seventh-day Sabbath ;"† which would

\* It does not appear, by the result of the *Trial*, in the following *Account*, that the judge charged the jury. It is most probable, as conjectured at the close of this Preface, that *proceedings were stayed*, and Mr. Elwall acquitted because he had not been regularly served with " a copy of the indictment."

† " To which is added, ' The Vanity and Improbability of expecting that any good Jew should ever be brought over to the pretended Christian Religion as it is now professed, by all the Established Churches in Europe.' There was a fourth edition of this tract in 1741, with an account of the Author's trial. He was a man of a serious and inquisitive turn of mind, who thought for himself, and was not afraid or ashamed to own his opinions ; but published them to the world in a strong and manly style, and endeavoured to excite attention to his arguments by the singularity and boldness of his address. Of this the titles and strain of the treatises which he published, afford a striking proof. But, as he was wont to observe, man being liable to error, whenever he was convinced of his mistakes, he had the courage to acknowledge and renounce them. Among other sentiments, contrary to the common opinion, he thought the seventh day of the week was to be observed for ever as the sabbath-day. He therefore shut up his shop and ceased from all business every Saturday, and opened it on the Sunday ; which made the unthinking crowd, instigated by those who should have known better things, to call him a Jew ; and he was, for many years after his death, remembered by no other name, among the common people of Wolverhampton, than that of Jew Elwall. He published in defence of his judgment on this subject, a tract, which passed through several editions, entitled, ' A true Testimony for God and his Sacred Law ; being a plain and honest Defence of the Fourth Commandment of God.'"

probably have been mentioned in the course of the Trial, if it had been published at that time.

1788. Since the writing of the above, the Editor has had the pleasure of knowing many of Mr. Elwall's acquaintance, and particularly Mr. John Martin, of Skilts-Park, between Birmingham and Alcester, who was present at the Trial. He is now in his eighty-fourth year, and perfectly remembers that it was in 1726, and he thinks it was the summer-assizes, because the weather was very hot. The reputation of the Trial drew many persons to hear it, and himself among the rest; and being acquainted with some of the sheriff's men he got a very convenient station, at about an equal distance from the judge on his left-hand, and Mr. Elwall on his right, where he saw and heard to the greatest advantage. The Trial, he says, was in the morning, and the figure of Mr. Elwall, who was a tall man, with white hair, a large beard and flowing garments, struck every body with respect. He spake about an hour with great gravity, fluency, and presence of mind, but what is printed is the substance of what he said. The judge gave the most obliging attention to him, and the confusion of the clergy, when he paused and waited for their answer, as mentioned in the Trial, was very visible. During the Trial, Mr. Martin says he was struck with the resemblance of it to that of Paul. He does not recollect that the jury brought in any verdict, but the judge said he was at liberty to go where he pleased. It is possible that the Trial might not come to a regular termination, on account of Mr. Elwall not having had a copy of the indictment, as mentioned in this account.

*Memoir of Mr. Edward Elwall, prefixed to his Trial: Bilston, 1808, p. 4. This Memoir has been attributed to the pen of the venerable Dr. Toulmin, who well exemplified, in a long and eventful life, what he ably proved, on apostolical authority, The practical Efficacy of the Unitarian Doctrine.*

# THE TRIAL

OF

MR. E. ELWALL.



**BECAUSE** so many persons have earnestly desired to read this Trial, I have here published a second edition of it, in order to encourage all honest men, who have the eternal law of God on their side, not to fear the faces of priests, who are generally the grand adversaries of liberty and truth, and the bastions and bulwarks of all ceremonies, fopperies and absurd doctrines that are in the world.

I do this for the glory of the Most High God, and for the honour of his sacred law, and for the good of all my fellow-creatures; that they may obey God, and not man; Christ, and not the Pope; the prophets and apostles, and not prelates and priests; and God knoweth this is my sincere desire, that all religion and spiritual things may be perfectly free, neither forced nor hindered; this being the true liberty of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise authority, but it shall not be so with you."

About fourteen years ago, I wrote a book entitled, "A True Testimony for God and his Sacred Law; being a plain, honest Defence of the First Commandment of God, against all the Trinitarians under Heaven, 'Thou shalt have no other gods but me.'" I lived then at Wolverhampton in Staffordshire\*, where my ancestors have lived above eleven hundred years, ever since the Saxons conquered the Britons.

When this book was published, the priests in the country began to rage, especially the priests of Wolverhampton; who had a great hand in the several troubles I underwent. In short, they never ceased till they had procured a large indictment against me at Stafford assizes; where I felt the power of God, enabling me to speak before a very great

\* "He was a native of Sedgeley," near Wolverhampton; where "he carried on for some years, the trade of a mercer and grocer," and "made an easy fortune.—He greatly distinguished himself as a zealous asserter of the civil and religious rights of mankind." Mem. p. 3.

number of people ; being accused of heresy, &c. But I truly answered, as my beloved brother *Paul* did in his day, viz. *In that way which some call heresy, so choose I to serve the God of my fathers, believing all that is written in the law and the prophets.*

After the long indictment was read, I was asked if I pleaded guilty, or not guilty. I said I was not guilty of any evil that I knew of, in writing that book ; but if they meant whether I wrote the book or not (for they had quoted many pages of the book in that indictment), I owned I did write it ; and that if I might have liberty to speak, I believed I should make it manifest to be the plain truth of God.

Then the judge stood up, and said, “ Mr. Elwall, I suppose you have had a copy of your indictment ? ” I told him I had not had any copy of it. Upon which he turned towards the priests, and told them that I ought to have had a copy of it. But they not answering, he turned to me, and said, That if I would give bail, and be bound to appear at the next assizes, he would defer my trial till then. But I told him, I would not give bail, neither should any man be bound for me ; that if the Prince of Wales himself would, he should not ; for, said I, “ I have an innocent breast, and I have injured no man ; and therefore I desire no other favour, but that I may have liberty to plead to the indictment myself.”

Upon which he said, very courteously, “ You may.” The judge having given me liberty of pleading to the indictment, I began my speech with the sacred first commandment of God, viz. “ Thou shalt have no other gods but Me.” I insisted upon the word *Me* being a singular ; and that it was plain and certain, that God spake of himself, as one single person or being, and not three distinct persons. And that it was manifest, that all the church of God, which then heard those words, understood it in the same plain, obvious sense as I do ; as is most evident from the words of the prophet Moses : who said to Israel thus ; *Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know, that the Lord he is God ; there is none else besides him ; out of heaven he made thee hear his voice, &c.* I told them, that from the words *he*, and *him*, and *his*, it was certain God was but one single person, one single *he*, or *him*, or *his*. I told them that all the patriarchs from the beginning of the world did always address themselves to God, as one single Being. O thou *Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth* ; and Abraham said to the king of Sodom, *I have lift up my*

*hand unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, &c.* They knew nothing of a Trinity, nor of God's being a plurality of persons; that monstrous doctrine was not then born, nor of two thousand years after, till the apostacy and popery began to put up its filthy head.

Then I told them, that all the prophets witnessed to the truth of the same pure, uncorrupted Unitarian doctrine of one God, and no other but he: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" Then I told them the words of God to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect;" and by the prophet Isaiah, "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?" Not the Holy *Three*. I told them that the words *Me* and *One* did utterly exclude any other person's being God, but that *One* single *Me*; and that God himself often testifies the same truth, by saying, "Is there any God besides Me?" And then tells us plainly, *There is no God, I know not any*: "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me." Isaiah xlv. 5.

Now, said I, *let God be true, but every man a liar*, that is, every man that contradicteth him; for he is the God of truth; he says, *I lift up my hand to heaven, I say, I live for ever*.

After I had pleaded many texts in the Old Testament, I began to enter the New; and told them, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the prophet like unto Moses, held forth the same doctrine that Moses had done; for when a certain ruler came to ask him which was the first and great commandment, (or how he expounded it,) he told him the same words that Moses had said: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord," not three, "and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c. And the scribe said, "Thou hast answered right, for there is but one God, and there is no other but he," &c. Then I mentioned the words of Christ in the xviith of John and ver. 3, as very remarkable, and worthy of all their observation: "This is life eternal," to "know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And then I turned my face directly towards the priests (my prosecutors, who all stood on the right side of the judge). Now, said I, since the lips of the blessed Jesus, which always spake the truth, say his Father is the only true God; who is he, and who are they that dare set up another, in contradiction to my blessed Lord, who says, his Father is *the only true God*?

And I stopped here, to see if any of them would answer ; but the power of God came over them, so that all their mouths were shut up, and not one of them spake a word. So that I turned about over my left shoulder, and warned the people, in the fear of God, not to take their religious sentiments from men, but from God : not from the Pope, but from Christ ; not from prelates nor priests, but from the prophets and apostles.

And then I turned towards the judge, and told him, that I was the more convinced of the truth of what I had said from the words of my blessed Lord ; who said, *Call no man Father here upon earth ; for one is your Father, even God. And call no man Master, for one is your Master, even Christ.* For hence, said I, I deduce this natural inference, that in all things that are of a spiritual nature, we ought to take our religion from God and his prophets, from Christ and his apostles. It will be too long to mention all the texts and proofs that I made use of ; I will only add one or two, as that of Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 4—6, where the apostle tells us, “ There is none other God but one ; for though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things ;” so that I told them, here was a plain demonstration ; for he says, *there is but one God* : and he tells us who that one God is, that is, *the Father*. And therefore no other person could be God but the Father only ; and what I had written in my book was the plain truth, and founded on God’s own words, *Thou shalt have no other gods but me*.

In short, I could plainly perceive there was a general convincement through the court. The judge and justices of the peace did not like the prosecution ; but saw plainly, that out of envy the priests had done it. I then began to set before them the odious nature of that hell-born principle of persecution, and that it was hatched in hell ; that it never came from Jesus Christ ; that he and his followers were often persecuted themselves, but they never persecuted any ; that we had now a very flagrant instance of it in the Papists at Thorne ; where they first took away the schools where our brethren the Protestants educated their children ; then they took away the places of their religious worship ; then they put them in prisons ; then confiscated their estates, and, last of all, took away their lives.\*

\* “ 1724. Nov. 7. A tumult having been raised at Thorne, in Poland, in July last, occasioned by a Popish procession,” during which “ a Jesuit furiously attacked

Now we can cry out loud enough against this, and shew the inhumanity, cruelty and barbarity of it; but, said I, if we, who call ourselves Protestants, shall be found acting in the same spirit, against others, the crime will be greater in us than in them; because we have attained to greater degrees of light than they.

However, I told them, that I had put my house in order, and made up my accounts with all men as near as I could; and that as I owed no man here any thing, so I would not pay a penny towards this prosecution: and that I was sure of it, that whatever fine they laid on me, or "whatever hole or prison," said I, "you thrust me into, I shall find God's living presence with me, as I feel it this day:" and so ended my speech.

Upon this a justice of the peace, one Rupert Humpatch, got up, went to the judge, laid his hand upon the judge's shoulder, and said, "My lord, I know this man to be an honest man; and what I say, I speak not by hear-say, but experience; for I was his next-door neighbour three years." Also, another justice spake to the same effect. Then the judge spake to me: "Mr. Elwall, I perceive you have studied very deeply into this controversy; but have you ever consulted any of our reverend clergy and bishops of the church of England?" I answered, "Yes, I have; and among others, the Archbishop of Canterbury\* himself, with whom I have exchanged ten letters, viz. four I have had from him, and six he has had from me," (at which words all the priests stared very earnestly). "Well," says the judge, "and was not the Archbishop able to give you some satisfaction in these points, Mr. Elwall?" I said, "No; but rather quite the re-

some Lutheran students, who were standing by, and endeavoured to force them to kneel to the Host. The Protestants, whom the Government charged to be the authors of it, had the following sentence passed on them, by the Chancellor of Poland; viz.—The president and vice-president of the town, for neglecting their duty, and thereby countenancing the tumult, were adjudged to be beheaded, and their estates confiscated," in consequence of which "President Rosner and nine burghers were beheaded on the 7th of December following, and a heavy fine imposed on the city. Fifteen more, for assaulting the Jesuits' College," (who had "provoked the populace by insulting language, and even by firing of masks,) condemned to be beheaded. Several others for having profaned the image of the Blessed Virgin, to have their right hands cut off, and afterwards to be quartered and burnt. A multitude of other Protestants were fined and imprisoned, for being accessory to the tumult. The Protestant magistrates were displaced and their church taken from them." Salmon's Chronol. Hist. 1747, II. p. 151, and Crutwell's Gazetteer, 1798. III. *Thorne*. This transaction has been named *The Massacre of Thorne*.

\* Dr. Wake, who was *Primate* from 1716 to his decease in 1737. He has been described as "a man of uncommon abilities and learning; an advocate for free inquiry and liberty while he was young," but "far from being so zealous about them after his advancement to the See of Canterbury." *Biog. Dict.* 1784, XII. p. 392.

verse; for that in all the letters I sent to the Archbishop, I grounded my arguments upon the words of God and his prophets, Christ and his apostles; but in his answers to me, he referred me to acts of parliament, declarations of state, &c., whereas I told the Bishop, in one of my letters, that I wondered a man of his natural and acquired abilities, should be so weak as to turn me over to human authorities, in things of a divine nature; for though in all things that are of a temporal nature, and concern the civil society, I will 'be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,' even from the king upon the throne down to the meanest officer in the land; yet in things that are of a spiritual nature, and concern my faith, my worship of God, and future state, I would *call no man father here upon earth*, nor regard either popes or councils, prelates or priests of any denomination, nor convocations, nor assemblies of divines, but obey God and his prophets, Christ and his apostles." Upon which the judge answered, "Well, if his grace of Canterbury was not able to give you satisfaction, Mr. Elwall, I believe I shall not;" and so sat down and rested him, for I think he had stood up for near an hour and a quarter.

Then he stood up again, and turning to the priests talked softly to them. I did not hear what he said, or what they said to him; but I guessed from what the judge said next; for, says he, "Mr. Elwall, you cannot but be sensible that what you have written, being contrary to the commonly received doctrines of the church, it has given offence to some of your neighbours, and particularly to the clergy; are you willing to promise, before the face of the country here, that you will not write any more on this head?" I answered, "God forbid that I should make thee any such promise; for when I wrote this book, I did it in the fear of God, and I did not write to please the Church of Rome, nor the Church of England, nor the Church of Scotland, but to please that God who gave me my breath; and therefore, if at any time I find myself drawn forth to write in defence of this sacred first commandment, or any other of the ten, I hope I shall do it in the same spirit of sincerity as I have done this." And I perceived the judge was not in any wise displeased at my honest, plain, bold answer; but rather his heart seemed to be knit in love to me; and he soon declared me acquitted: and then the clerk of the arraigns, or assizes, stood up, and said, "Mr. Elwall, you are acquitted; you may go out of court when you please."

So I went away through a very great crowd of people (for it was thought there was a thousand people at the trial), and having spoke long I was a-thirst, so went to a well and drank. Then I went out of town by a river-side, and looking about, and seeing no one near, I kneeled down on the bank of the river, and sent up my thank-offering to that good God who had delivered me out of their hands.

By the time that I returned to the town, the court was up and gone to dinner: a justice of peace and another person met me, and would have me to eat and drink with them, which I did; and afterwards, as I was walking along the street, some persons hove up a great sash-window, and invited me up to them; and when I entered the room, I found ten or a dozen persons, most of them justices of the peace; and amongst them a priest, whom they called Doctor. One of the justices took me by the hand, and said, "Mr. Elwall, I am heartily glad to see you, and I was glad to hear you bear your testimony so boldly as you did. "Yea," says another justice, "and I was glad to see Mr. Elwall come off with flying colours as he did:" upon which the priest said (in a very bitter manner), "He ought to have been hanged." I turned unto him, and said, "Friend, I perceive thou dost not know what spirit thou art of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy, but to save: but thou wouldest have me destroyed." Upon which one of the justices said, "How now, Doctor, did not you hear one of the justices say, that he was an honest man, and that what he said was not by hearsay, but by experience; and would you have honest men hanged, Doctor? Is this good doctrine?" So that the priest said but little more for some time: so I took leave of the justices, and took horse for Wolverhampton, for I knew there would be great joy in my family, for the common people all expected to hear of my being fined and imprisoned. But a farmer that lived near, who had been upon the jury at Stafford, got to town before me, and the people went all up and asked him, "What have they done to Mr. Elwall?" "Have they put him in prison?" He answered "No, he preached there an hour together, and our parsons could say never a word. What must they put him in prison for? I told our foreman of the jury Mr. Elwall was an honest man, and his father was an honest man, I knew him very well." So they were all damped; but there was great joy in my family, and amongst all my friends: praises,

living praises be attributed to that good God who delivered me out of their hands! \*

Christ never told us of that scandalous Popish invention, of his human nature praying to his Divine nature; but, like a true, obedient Son of God, submitted to death, even that cruel death which the hatred and envy of persecuting, wicked priests inflicted on him, because he had so plainly and truly told them all of their blindness, covetousness, pride and hypocrisy. And therefore "God raised him from the dead;" and for his faithfulness "God has exalted him—to be a prince and a saviour" to all those that obey that pure doctrine which God gave him to teach; "that denying ungodliness and *sinful* lusts, we should live soberly and righteously in this world." *Then are we his disciples indeed, when we do those things that he hath commanded.* Then shall we be saved, not by the merits of Christ, that is another Popish invention, for he never did any thing but what it was his duty to do, and therefore could not merit any thing for others; but he taught us the true way to find acceptance with God, and that was by *doing the will of his Father which is in heaven*: and therein he is *the way, the truth, and the life*, because *no one cometh unto the Father, but by that way.*

Neither did he make satisfaction unto God for us. It was impossible; and what God never required: but *he who had no pleasure in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn from their wickedness and live*, out of the immeasurable height and depth of his love, directed our Lord Jesus Christ to teach mankind a never-failing way of being reconciled to God; and that was by sincere repentance and reformation. This was the gospel or good tidings of Jesus Christ, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He tells us, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" and by that beautiful, excellent parable of the prodigal son, he illustrates the tender mercy of his

\* "After his trial" Mr. Elwall "removed to London, and became a member of a seventh day Baptist church. In the latter part of his life he attended frequently the religious assemblies of the Quakers, and, it is said, was sometimes admitted to speak among them. He died in London, at an advanced age, with an unsullied reputation, about the year 1745." Mem. p. 10. It appears that Mr. Elwall was once in company with Dr. Johnson, and that his Trial was recommended by Sir John Pringle to the notice of Mr. Boswell. See his Life of Johnson, 4to. l. p. 363. 1772. Mr. Boswell speaks in one place of the *heretic* Elwall, and in another of Elwall the *enthusiast*, but he was too much a man of the world to have been able to appreciate such a character.

God and our God, of his Father and our Father, without any satisfaction. The compassionate Father required none at all, but humble confession and submission, with sincere repentance and reformation; and then comes *the best robe, the ring, the shoes, and the fatted calf*, to demonstrate the paternal acceptance without satisfaction or sacrifice, *but a broken and a contrite heart which he will never refuse*; for he can as soon cease to be God, as cease to be merciful.

And as to the Trinitarians, nothing is more plain, than that they feed upon ashes; "a deceived heart hath turned them aside," because they will not make use of those rational faculties which God hath given them; nor say, "Is there not a lie in my right-hand?" Otherwise they would never flatter the humble Jesus, nor make the most high God to be a plurality of persons.

For as to the Holy Ghost (their third God) it is evidently no distinct person from God, any more than a man's spirit is a distinct person from the man; so that the spirit of God is God's spirit, as is manifest from scripture and reason, Gen. vi. 9: "My spirit shall not always strive with man.—And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters: And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters.—And God made all things by the word of his power." So that the word of God, and the spirit of God, are not distinct persons from God, but the power of God, and the energy of God. So the word of a man and the spirit of a man, are not distinct persons from the man, but the man himself; if his word be false, or his spirit be wicked, the man is false and wicked.

The same degree of stupidity that leads Trinitarians to call the word of God, and the spirit of God, distinct persons, would lead them to call the wisdom of God, the goodness of God, the love of God, the peace of God, the power of God, and the mercy of God, distinct persons; and make God to be a Trinity of Trinities; for it is certain God is expressly called by all those names.

But whosoever goes about to father this absurd and horrid doctrine of the Trinity upon Jesus Christ, does egregiously abuse him; who told us plainly, *his Father was greater than he; and that he could do nothing of himself*, which is a demonstration that he is not God: For we are sure God is omnipotent, and can do all things

of himself; being self-existent and independent, the Supreme Creator of the universe; and in this it is, that the Unitarians triumph as unanswerable, believing in Jesus Christ, who told us his Father was *the only true God*; John xvii. 3.

P. S. By these last words of Christ, I myself was convinced many years ago.\*

† Besides the tracts already mentioned, Mr. Elwall published, "The grand Question in Religion considered: whether we shall obey God or Man, Christ or the Pope, the Prophets and the Apostles, or Prelates and Priests; with an Account of the Author's Trial." Also "Idolatry discovered and detected, shewing, that almost all the pretended Christians, Greeks, Papists and Protestants, (except the Unitarians) are guilty of it, by worshipping a mortal Man as the Most High God, directly contrary to the express Words of the holy Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, Matt. iv. 10, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;' with a plain honest Defence of the sacred Ten Commandments of God; and the Hypocrisy, Deceit and Rebellion of all that live in open Violation of them: with an account of the Author's Trial. 1744."

"Previously to this, Mr. Elwall had published a tract, entitled; 'The supernatural Incarnation of Jesus Christ proved to be false, having no Foundation in the Prophets, nor in all the Old Testament, and utterly inconsistent with his being the Son of David; but the main Prop and Support of all the absurd Doctrines, both of Papists and Protestants, to the great Scandal and Reproach of the true Christian Religion: and that our Lord Jesus Christ was the real Son of Joseph and Mary.' This piece came to a second edition in 1743. It affords a strong specimen of a frank and open mind, especially when it is considered, that it turned on a point that had not then I believe, been much discussed; and on a fact that had not been avowedly denied, if even doubted by most modern Christians." Mem. pp. 6, 7. The last tract is noticed in "The History of Early Opinions," III. Ch. xx. *Introd.*

A  
FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION  
OF CERTAIN  
PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE

RELATING TO  
THE POWER OF MAN TO DO THE WILL OF GOD,  
ORIGINAL SIN,  
ELECTION AND REPROBATION,  
THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST, AND  
ATONEMENT FOR SIN BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

—◆—◆—◆—  
*Search the Scriptures.* John v. 39.  
—◆—◆—◆—

THE PREFACE.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

IN all theological controversies our appeal lies to the Bible, which contains the writings of the inspired prophets, and of the apostles and evangelists, who have recorded the precepts and doctrines of Christ. To those who lived in the times in which these books were published, they were, no doubt, very intelligible; the language in which they are written, and the customs to which they allude, being perfectly known to them. But what was easy to them, a long course of time has rendered extremely difficult to us, who use a very different language, and whose manners and customs are so exceedingly unlike those of the Jews. On this account, it may puzzle the greatest scholar of the present age to make out the sense of a passage of Scripture, which could not but have been perfectly understood by the most illiterate person in that age. In this state of things, the *ignorant and unlearned* are very liable to *wrest the Scriptures*, as the apostle Peter says they ever have done, while good sense and sound learning often maintain a very unequal contest.

It is another unfavourable circumstance with respect to the right understanding of the Scriptures in this country, that the English translation of them was made at a time when the Christian world was but just emerged from the darkness of Popery, and while the belief of all those opinions which are combated in the *Appeal* was almost universally retained. Our translators, therefore, having been educated in the belief of, and in a reverence for, those particular opinions, and not having had their minds sufficiently enlightened to call them in question, it is no wonder that, without any ill design, they should, in many places of their version, have expressed their own sentiments, and not those of the apostles. In all these cases a just translation is all that is necessary to remove the errors into which a wrong translation has led us. But, with respect to them, you, my brethren, who are not acquainted with the languages in which the Scriptures were originally written, must necessarily depend upon other persons for the interpretation of them. You may, however, be able, in a great measure, to judge for yourselves concerning different translations, by considering, if you will take pains to reflect upon the subject, which rendering of a doubtful passage is most agreeable to the general strain of the Scriptures, and to common sense.\*

Do not, however, immediately conclude that an interpretation of a passage in Scripture is unnatural, because, when it is first proposed to you, it may seem to be so; because this may arise from nothing but your having been long accustomed to understand it in a different sense, and from having imagined, though without sufficient grounds, that the tenour of Scripture favoured a contrary sense. The Roman Catholics, I doubt not, think it very unnatural to interpret the words of our Saviour, *This is my body*, in any other than in the most literal manner; and they think that our Lord's saying, upon another occasion, "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," abundantly confirms their interpretation.

Now, in this little treatise, I desire no greater indulgence in the interpretation of Scripture than all Protestants think themselves justified in taking, when they assert, that the meaning of these figurative expressions is, not that the flesh and blood, but that the doctrine of Christ is to be received and digested, that is, to be improved and practised by us,

\* To assist such an inquiry, Mr. Wakefield published, in a small volume, "A New Translation of those Parts only of the New Testament which are wrongly translated in our common Version." 1789.

in order to our final salvation. Since the very strongest figures of speech are manifestly used in almost all the books of Scripture, it must be very unreasonable to expect that the most literal interpretation should always be the best.

I must farther apprise you, my brethren, that the passages which I have attempted to explain, being, for the most part, highly figurative, are, on that account, peculiarly difficult to understand; so that, though I may not have hit upon the precise sense of the writers, there may be no doubt, from other considerations, that the sense which I am combating is not the true one, which is quite sufficient for my purpose. It by no means follows, that, because I am wrong, my adversaries are right. In these cases there is the greatest room for criticism and diversity of opinion. I have given what at present appears to me to be the real sense of every text of Scripture which I have taken into consideration; but I shall gladly avail myself of the new lights which may be thrown upon any of them in future editions of this pamphlet.

In the mean time, with great diffidence of my own judgment, I recommend what I have now written to your most serious and candid consideration; desiring that you would read it, with your Bibles at hand, turning to every passage to which I refer, and reading what goes before and after it; because I have no doubt but that, in this manner, you will see much more reason, if not to approve of my interpretations, yet to reject those of my adversaries, than I have suggested in this treatise, in which I have made a point of being as concise as I possibly could, consistently with perspicuity.

The rapid sale of the *Appeal*\* makes me hope that, inconsiderable as the performance is, it has been the instrument of some good, in the hands of that Being who works by small things as well as by great ones.

### 1. *Of the Power of Man to do the Will of God.*

That the sacred writers consider all mankind as naturally possessed of sufficient power to do what God requires of them, is evident from their earnest remonstrances and exhortations with persons of all ranks and conditions, and

\* In the first part of the Author's *Memoirs*, dated 1787, he says, "by this time more than thirty thousand copies of the *Appeal* have been dispersed."

their severe censure of them when they refuse to comply with their exhortations. Nor was this the case with the Jews and Christians only, who were favoured with Divine revelation. The apostle Paul evidently considers the Gentiles also in the same light; though, much not being given to them, much was not required of them.

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, this apostle represents the Gentile world, in general, as having grossly corrupted themselves; yet, in that very representation, he not only says, ver. 18, 19, that they had subjected themselves to the "wrath of God—revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them;" but also ver. 32, that "knowing the judgment of God (that they which commit such things are worthy of death), they not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." So that the degeneracy and depravity into which they were sunk were owing, not to want of ability, but to wilfulness, and a determined opposition to the powers of conscience with which their Maker had endowed them, and which continued unceasing remonstrances within them. Reasoning with the Jews, in the second chapter, he gives the following representation of some of the Gentiles, ver. 14, 15, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their *reasonings between themselves, accusing or else defending*:"\* and he adds, in the 26th and 27th verses, "Therefore, if the uncircumcision," i. e. the uncircumcised Gentile, "keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" i. e. shall he not be equally accepted by God as a righteous Jew? "And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who, by the letter and circumcision, dost transgress the law?" I presume no one will think so meanly of St. Paul's reasoning as to suppose, that he here puts a case which either never was true in fact, or possible in nature; but if this case either ever was true in fact, or possible, those uncircumcised Gentiles, who should answer his description, must certainly have received from their Maker capacities and powers to do

\* See Taylor, on *Romans*. P.

the will of God acceptably. And if others did not act in like manner, it was not owing to their not having received like natural powers, but to their not making a like improvement of them.

But let us attend to some passages which have been produced in proof that man is not, by nature, able to do the will of God, or that his Maker has not given him capacity and ability to know and do his will acceptably, without the superadded operations of special grace to remedy his natural inability.

1 Cor. ii. 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Upon this text I would observe, first, that the word, which is here translated *natural*, properly signifies *animal*, or *sensual*. Thus, 1 Cor. xv. 44, 45, the apostle uses the same word three times for that body which dies, and is buried, to distinguish it from that *spiritual* body which shall rise again; where the word *animal* much better expresses the apostle's meaning than *natural*. Again, James uses it, ch. iii. 15, where our translators have rendered it *sensual*: "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." It is also used ver. 19 of Jude's Epistle, and rendered sensual: "These be they who separate themselves, *sensual*, having not the spirit." These are all the passages of the New Testament where I find this word used. And it appears, that where it denotes the character of persons, or the moral quality of things, our translators have rendered it *sensual*. Consequently, in consistency with themselves, they should have rendered the text under consideration, "But the *sensual* man (who has no higher aims than the gratification of his animal senses) receiveth not the things of the spirit of God," &c. This would have been readily understood and acknowledged by all, and is perfectly consonant to what he says to the Romans, viii. 7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Secondly, In this chapter the apostle assures the Corinthians, that the doctrine which he had preached to them did not take its rise from worldly wisdom, or philosophy, but was *that* only which had been revealed to the apostles by the spirit of God, ver. 10: That he had preached this doctrine in those terms only which the same spirit dictated, comparing the several particulars of it one with another,

and with those things which the same spirit had revealed to the patriarchs and prophets of old: That none of the wise or powerful men of this world had, or could possibly have discovered these counsels of God revealed by the spirit of God in the gospel, which spirit the apostles have received, that they might know, and instruct others in the things that are freely given us of God. "But the *sensual* man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God," revealed by it to the apostles, and preached by them to the world, "for they are foolishness to him," contradicting all his former sentiments and principles, to which he still adheres; "neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" i. e. by the sole instructions of the spirit, to which he neither attends nor submits. "But the spiritual man (*discerneth* or) judgeth all things;" i. e. all the forementioned things of God revealed by his spirit, all gospel-truths; "but he himself is discerned or judged of no man;" i. e. he is not subjected in these respects to the judicature of the powers of this world, to the principles of human science, or the rules of human oratory.

Hence I would observe, first, that "the deep things of God," or the things of the spirit of God, which the apostle speaks of in this chapter, are the doctrines of the gospel-revelation. Now it is readily allowed, that, as men were not endowed with any natural powers whereby they could discover these, they could not know them before they were revealed. But, then, they were not under obligation to know or comply with them, till they were revealed. Secondly, that they who did not receive and comply with them, when revealed, are not represented as incapable through want of natural abilities and powers, but only as disqualified, or under a moral impotence, through sensual dispositions which they indulged, and habits which they had contracted.

By "the spiritual man" seems to be primarily meant here, the apostles, to whom the spirit of God revealed the truths of the gospel; but they also may be comprehended under the denomination who receive the gospel-truths, believing in the veracity, and submitting to the authority of the spirit which revealed them.

John xv. 5: "Without me ye can do nothing." This single clause of a long sentence, being separated from its connexion with what goes before it, is produced as a proof that man is not able to do the will of God acceptably, without the immediate assistance, or operation, of special

grace upon him through Christ. But, if we look into our Lord's discourse, we find him exhorting his disciples to adhere steadfastly to him and his doctrine, that they might "bring forth much fruit." He reminds them, that they had already gained much spiritual improvement by his instructions, ver. 3: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." He intimates that, if they abandoned him and his doctrine, they would deprive themselves of the means of fruitfulness. He is not speaking then of the natural powers of man, but of the importance of the doctrines which he taught, to render men fruitful in good works; but this seems necessarily to suppose a capacity in man to understand and improve his doctrines to these purposes.

It seems to be treating Christ and his words with great irreverence, to apply them to other purposes than those for which he used them. We all readily agree that (in our Lord's sense of the expression) *without him we can do nothing*; i. e. if we abandon him and the gospel, we cannot be fruitful in holiness or good works; and are very thankful for the provision he hath made, and the assistances he hath afforded us by his word, that we may bring forth much fruit.

Philip. ii. 13: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

In this passage the apostle exhorts the Philippians to "work out *their* own salvation with fear and trembling," from a grateful sense of the goodness of God in granting them, for that purpose, the instructions and motives of the gospel, by which such convictions had already been awakened in them, as had excited them both to choose and perform what God required. The energy, or operation of God here spoken of, seems to be the energy of instruction and persuasion. No doubt it is a very reasonable and powerful motive to us all to work out our salvation, that God, in unspeakable love and good-will, is continually working in us, by the truths and motives of the gospel, to choose and perform what he hath required of us.

1 Cor. xv. 10: "But, by the grace of God I am what I am."

Let any one carefully attend to the whole case of Paul's conversion, from being a persecutor, to become a preacher and an apostle of Jesus Christ, and then say whether it is reasonable to draw general conclusions respecting all men from such a case. However, we will all readily adopt his words, and say, *through the grace of God*, and his favours freely bestowed upon us by the gospel, *we are what we are*.

Eph. ii. 8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

The word *that* doth not refer to faith, as is evident from the original, but to the preceding clause of the sentence. *That ye are saved by grace through faith*, this is "not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." He is the sole author of this method of salvation.

Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

Look into the prophet himself, and I think it will appear, that this is a prediction of the restoration of the people of the Jews to their own country, at the end of the Babylonish captivity, and that afterwards they should no more return to the practice of idolatry, to which their fathers had been so prone. Now, the history of that people informs us that this prediction was verified in fact. When God promises to give them a new heart, and to put a new spirit within them, it relates to the particular subject spoken of, viz. idolatry: and, in reality, there was a wonderful change wrought in the dispositions and practice of that people in this respect. This was effected by the deep impressions made upon them by the righteous judgments of God for the idolatries of their forefathers and of themselves. But the *new heart* and *new spirit* must not be understood of an universal, or general change from evil to good, because the whole subsequent history of the Jews, and particularly in the gospel-times, contradicts it. It may, however, refer to some greater change to be produced in the moral character of the Jewish nation, on their return from their present dispersion, produced by the consideration of the hand of God in it, as the just punishment of their former vices. But it seems a strange perversion, to make this particular prediction to the returning captives, a general promise to mankind, at least to Christians, of producing in them a thorough change of heart and life by the immediate operation of the spirit of God. This may be called accommodating Scripture-passages, but it seems taking very bold liberties of making what we please out of them, very inconsistent with a sincere belief in them, as containing the word of God.

Psalm li. 10: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

We ought not to interpret the figurative expressions of Hebrew poetry too literally, or to expect it in the rigid accuracy of expression of our Western prose. The psalmist seems to mean no more by create, than produce, or cause; which does not exclude the instrumentality of ordinary means, any more than the word renew. Nay, the psalmist seems to expect that the clean heart must be created and the right spirit renewed, not by an immediate operation of sovereign and almighty grace, but by the instrumentality of those ordinary and usual means of grace which he had long enjoyed, and experienced the good effects of; and therefore he adds in the following words, ver. 11, "Cast me not away from thy presence," i. e. deprive me not of the ordinances of thy worship in the tabernacle, where thou manifestest thy presence in a glorious manner, and "take not thy holy spirit from me," i. e. that holy spirit with the illuminations of which he had, as a prophet, been so often favoured, and from which he had reaped great spiritual improvement.

Luke xxiii. 43: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

Although certain writers and teachers of religion profess not to mention the case of the penitent thief to encourage presumption and carelessness in any one, yet they mention it so often, and insist on it so much, as an instance of a great and sudden change taking place at the last hour of a poor sinner's life, at the same time insinuating that the same change may take place in others, (for the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear,) that I fear they do, in fact, unhappily encourage presumption and carelessness in many. Let us therefore consider this case with a little attention.

The above-mentioned writers, &c., take for granted what is by no means certain, that the penitent thief's knowledge of Christ, and repentance of his own sins, commenced only at the time of his crucifixion along with Jesus. But is it not possible, that the crime for which he suffered might have been committed a long time before, though he had been apprehended for it only very lately; when, whatever change might in the mean time have been wrought in his character and conversation, the law must take its course, and he must suffer the punishment due to his misdeeds, though he had repented of them very sincerely, and become a new man? The evangelist has said nothing that precludes

this supposition, and therefore we are at liberty to make it, especially if it will contribute to render the circumstances of the narrative more consistent and accountable. Let us see then what those circumstances are.

First, observe that this penitent, in the reproof which he gave to his fellow-criminal, makes a candid and ingenuous confession of his crimes, and the justice of his punishment, and that grounded upon a just and proper principle, the fear of God. Ver. 40, 41: "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." This seems much more like the language of one who had long reflected upon, been seriously affected with, and formed mature conclusions from the sad subject, than of one who was but just now struck with a conviction of his sins, and a sense of his miserable state.

Secondly, observe also the clear and confident declaration which he makes concerning Jesus. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Can we suppose this declaration made by a man who had not known any thing of the person to whom he bears this testimony before this unhappy occasion? Doth it not seem rather the attestation of one who had considerable knowledge of the rectitude of his character, and the unblameableness of his conduct?

There are, I readily acknowledge, many difficulties attending the history of the penitent thief, which I have no occasion to consider in this place, it being sufficient for my present purpose to shew, that the doctrine of the probability of repentance at the article of death proving acceptable, will no longer have countenance from it.\*

John vi. 44, 45 & 65: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.—Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.—No man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father." Now, how is it that God is elsewhere said to draw men, but by the force of motives and instructions, which suppose that men have a power of attending to them and improving by them? It is also to be observed that, in the whole of the discourse, in which the words quoted above are introduced, Jesus is blaming the Jews for their infidelity; and it would be very extraordinary indeed, if for this purpose he should make use of an argument, which would intirely exculpate them, intimating that it was not in their power to do otherwise.

Our Lord sufficiently gives us to understand in what sense he uses the word *drawing* in the passage quoted above. He explains himself ver. 45: "It is written in the prophets, (Isa. liv. 13,) And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." This was the way in which God the Father drew some of the Jews to Christ at that time; viz. such of them as, influenced by reverence, love and duty to him, heard attentively, and learned the truths which he had already taught them by Moses and the prophets; but they who were of a different spirit and conduct, with respect to the Divine truths already revealed, could not come to Christ, who constantly referred them to the testimonies of Moses and the prophets in proof of his Divine mission. To them it was not given "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xiii. 11. Agreeably hereto he says on another occasion, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," John vii. 17. And he thus remonstrates against the unbelieving Jews, ch. v. 39—44, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.—But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.—How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" This appears plainly to be the language of one who considered the cause of the unbelief of these Jews as arising, not from natural inability, or the with-holding of the grace of God, but from contracted evil principles and habits, to which they determinedly adhered; as he speaks ver. 40, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

## II. *Of Original Sin.*

That mankind are considerable sufferers in consequence of the fall of Adam, is not denied; but all the evils which Moses specifies as affecting his posterity on that account, are of a corporeal and temporal nature, viz. labour, sorrow and death. It is possible, indeed, that the body being more subject to disease, the mind may be more feeble, and therefore more prone to comply with some temptations; but then it should also be considered, that a sickly constitution is favourable to many virtues, and we see that a state of confirmed health is often highly dangerous in a moral respect; so that upon the whole it is probable that our con-

dition is more favourable to virtue than that of Adam. That the sacred writers did not consider it as, upon the whole, worse than his, is evident from their never giving the least hint, that any allowance will be made to men for that natural disadvantage. Nay, many of the sinful posterity of Adam are blamed more severely than he was for his sin : and if we consider his situation and the circumstances of his fall, we cannot suppose that he had greater strength of mind to resist temptation than we are now possessed of. Since, however, some particular texts are alleged, to prove that the nature of man is totally depraved by the fall, inasmuch that all mankind, without exception, are now altogether incapable of any good thought, word or action ; and moreover, that we are all subject to the everlasting wrath of God on account of the sin of Adam, I shall give a brief explication of the principal of those texts.

Gen. vi. 5 : “ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” If we understand this passage literally, it will be contradicted by the character which is immediately afterwards given by Noah, of whom it is said, ver. 9, that he “ was a just man, and perfect in his generation,” and that he “ walked with God.” But it is plain that this wickedness of mankind was not owing to any natural depravity, which their derivation from Adam rendered necessary, but that it was a voluntary corruption, and had its rise from themselves only ; for it is said, ver. 12, that “ God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt ; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” Besides, this state of the world is alleged as a justification of the Divine proceedings against them, whereas, if they had been corrupt by the *necessity of nature*, it must have operated as a plea in their favour, with that Being who considers our frame, and remembers that we are but dust. If he makes suitable allowance for the infirmities of our bodies, much more would he consider the natural and necessary disorders of our minds.

Job xiv. 4 : “ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one.” This is a proverbial expression, signifying that nothing can be more perfect than its original ; but Job is not speaking in this place of the guilt and pollution of man, but of his sorrows and mortality.

Psalm li. 5 : “ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” This also has very much the air of a proverbial expression, signifying great depravity.

of heart, and very early habits of vice. That it was not intended to express a natural and invincible propensity to vice, is plain, because that would be inconsistent with the tenour of the whole psalm, in which the humble author seems disposed to aggravate, rather than to extenuate his offences, to which this last-mentioned consideration would have greatly contributed.

Rom. v. 12—14: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" &c.

I think a careful and impartial reader will observe, that the apostle speaks not here of the death of children, whom he does not once mention, or refer to, through the whole argument. But he speaks of those who were not only capable of sinning but had actually sinned, and refers us to the Mosaic history of mankind in the ages between the fall of Adam and the giving of the law by Moses. Sin and death entered into the world by Adam, and death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, consequently must have transgressed some law, ver. 13, 14. For, before the giving of the law by Moses, "sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law;" and the law of Moses they could not sin against before it was given. "Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," i. e. by eating the forbidden fruit, or violating any positive law of life given to them. What law then had they sinned against? Most evidently, the law of righteousness which God had written on their hearts; the sanction of which they were also well apprised of (as the apostle speaks of the Gentiles in general, ch. i. 32, of this epistle), "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Hence it appears that the apostle does not speak of the sin of Adam being imputed to make men sinners, and subject them to death; but of actual and personal sins, and of death as the recompense of them. Now look into the Mosaic history of this period, and we find before the flood, "that the wickedness of men was great in the earth."—Gen. vi. 5: "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.—For all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth," ver. 11, 12. And after the flood, excepting the faith and obedience of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we have little else recorded besides transgres-

sions of the law of righteousness, sins which men committed, though "not after the similitude of Adam's transgression." As to the death of infants; God the great giver of life, hath, undoubtedly a perfect right to resume it, whenever it seemeth meet to his infinite wisdom. But I do not recollect that the sacred writers do any where represent it as a punishment either for Adam's sin, or their own. In a few cases they speak of it as a punishment of the sin of their immediate parents, but then, as a punishment to their parents, who had sinned, not to the children who had not sinned.

Rom. v. 6, 8: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Let the intelligent reader judge for himself, whether the apostle does not speak here of the state of mankind (particularly of himself and the persons he writes to) before Christ's death, and the consequent publication of the gospel to the world, and intimate that the case is very different since that happy event? Doth he not plainly make the distinction in both verses, that we might not mistake his meaning? "When we were yet without strength," and "while we were yet sinners." But doth the case continue the same, since Christ died, with those to whom the blessings of the gospel are imparted? Then hath Christ died, and the gospel been published in vain. Yet some writers represent the state of those for whom Christ died, and who have received the gospel, as just the same as to *strength*, with them who had not received it, and who lived before it was published. Surely, any of us would be displeased to have our words wrested to purposes so different from our intentions; especially, when we had endeavoured to guard them from such abuse. God our maker hath given us intelligent capacities, suited to those discoveries which he hath made of his will, whether by the light of nature, or revelation; he hath given us also freedom of choice and action for the conduct of ourselves; he hath granted us the light and motives of the gospel for our fuller instruction and persuasion; he is ever present with us and ready to assist our sincere endeavours to know and to do his will; surely, then, it is unjust and ungrateful to him, to say that we are still "without strength," and if we be sinners, it is wholly our own fault. As for the Gentiles, even the worst of them, the apostle no where ascribes their want of strength, to their not

having received from their Maker sufficient abilities to know and do his will acceptably, but to their having voluntarily corrupted themselves and one another, and thereby lost the abilities which God had given them, and become dead in trespasses and sins.

Rom. viii. 7, 8: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

It appears to me that the apostle speaks here only of personal character and conduct, and the effects of them in producing governing habits; but not at all of any corruption or depravity of the nature of man effected by Adam's sin, whereby he is become incapable of doing that which is good, or of pleasing God. Adam, or his sin, is not mentioned by the apostle in treating of this subject. It is readily acknowledged, that a person who attaches himself to the gratification of his carnal or sensual appetites and passions, cannot perform the will of God, but must daily become more and more alienated from him and from his duty; but this is saying no more than that a wicked man cannot be a good man, or please God so long as he continues wicked. But it by no means follows that this man is unable to hear, understand, and receive salutary convictions from the truths of God, revealed by his Son Jesus Christ, and thereby become changed in his sentiments, dispositions and conduct, and from "carnally-minded" become "spiritually-minded." The various forms of speech which the apostle uses in the preceding and following verses seem only to express one and the same thing, viz. the change produced in the dispositions and conduct of men by preaching the gospel to them, and their attention to it, and sincere reception of it, together with the happy effects and consequences of it.

Eph. ii. 3: "And were by nature children of wrath even as others."

If we compare the passages in which the apostle uses the word *nature*, we shall find that he did not mean by it that internal frame, constitution or condition of being, wherewith God our maker hath formed us; but that external condition, or those outward circumstances (especially with relation to God and religious concerns) in which Divine Providence hath caused us to be born and live. Human nature, in our sense of the phrase, is the same in all mankind; but different persons may be brought forth into life, and spend it under very different natural circumstances, in

the apostle's sense of the word nature. Thus Rom. ii. 14, he says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law," and ver. 27, "Shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee?" &c. He here plainly speaks not of an internal frame, constitution or powers, or of what we call a nature, which the Gentiles had, different from that of the Jews; but of their external, moral and religious state and circumstances, as destitute of the instructions and assistances of the law of Moses, by which they were much below the Jews. Again, in the remonstrance which he tells us he made to Peter, we find these words, Gal. ii. 15, "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles;" when certainly he doth not mean to intimate that the Jews had a different sort of nature, or internal constitution, whereby they were Jews; but only we who are natural-born Jews, and have all along enjoyed the privileges of that people. So likewise in the text under consideration, having spoken of the Ephesians as formerly "dead in trespasses and sins, wherein, in time past, ye walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" he adds, ver. 3, "among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Observe, hitherto he speaks of external condition and circumstances, and of personal character and actual vices, and not at all of internal constitution, or a nature corrupted by the effects of Adam's sin. He adds, "and were by nature children of wrath," even as others; i.e. (conformable to his use of the word nature in other places) in consequence of our birth and situation among children of disobedience, where we were kept ignorant of the truth, deceived by false principles, and misled by bad examples, we ourselves were children of wrath, as others about us were, and many still continue. By children of wrath I apprehend the apostle does not mean here objects of the wrath and displeasure of God, but only describes further the personal character of those whom he so denominates. As in the close of the former verse he had mentioned children, or sons of disobedience, i.e. disobedient children, (and 1 Pet. i. 14, speaks of "obedient children," in the original it is children of obedience) so here he mentions "children of wrath," i.e. wrathful, furious, malignant and mischievous persons. In a striking and beautiful figure, he represents disobedience and wrath under the

persons of two fruitful mothers, whose offspring they had been. Accordingly, when the apostle comes in the beginning of the fourth chapter to exhort the Ephesian Christians to a conversation conformable to *the vocation wherewith they were called*, and quite the reverse of the description he gives in this verse of their former character and conduct, he begins with describing it thus, ver. 2, 3: "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." He also concludes the chapter thus:—"Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God *in Christ* hath forgiven you." Do we not see a greater propriety and force in these exhortations, when we consider them as addressed to persons who had formerly been "children of wrath"?

### III. *Of Election and Reprobation.*

Rom. ix. 11—16: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then, is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid; for he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," &c.

These verses, and the whole of this chapter, relate not to the election of particular persons to eternal life, but to the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews from the privileges of the gospel; and it is manifest that the apostle is not speaking in this place of the final state, or indeed of the persons of Esau and Jacob, but of their posterity, and that only with a view to temporal privileges and prerogatives.\*

The whole body of Christians, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, are frequently styled the chosen, and elect of God, on account of their external privileges, as the whole Jewish nation had been so named before, on the same account.

\* See the conclusion of Doddridge's Note on Rom. ix. 13.

This is an easy and plain sense of election, reflects not at all on the perfections of God, is consistent with the offers and exhortations of Scripture, and preserves a harmony between the language of the Old and New Testament.

It must be acknowledged, however, that in order to vindicate the Divine conduct in the calling of the Gentiles, the apostle alleges some facts, in which not whole nations, but particular persons are spoken of, and which seem to imply, that their minds were under supernatural influence in forming bad as well as good resolutions; and there are other passages of Scripture which at first sight seem to look the same way.

The hardness of Pharaoh's heart, *Exod. viii. 32, Rom. ix. 17*, the obstinacy of Sihon king of Heshbon, *Deut. ii. 30*, and the unbelief of many of the Jews, *Isa. vi. 10, Matt. xiii. 14, Mark iv. 12, Luke viii. 12, John xii. 40, Acts xxviii. 26, Rom. xi. 8*, are all ascribed to the purpose, act, or decree of God, who had important designs to answer by means of these blameable determinations of men. On the other hand, when persons believe and obey the gospel, it is ascribed to the Divine influence upon their minds.

*Matt. xi. 25, 26*: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." *John vi. 37*: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." See also *John xvii., Acts xvi. 14*. And the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, "that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul." Moreover, every thing of this nature is expressly referred to the arbitrary disposition of God, in *Rom. ix. 18—23*: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory."

To understand such passages as these, we should con-

sider, that in the language of the Scriptures God is said to do those things, which come to pass according to the natural course of things, as well as to perform things of a miraculous nature ; because they take place in consequence of the laws which he has originally established. And, certainly, if God had not made men liable to be seduced by temptation, they would not have sinned, any more than they could embrace truth without the means of becoming acquainted with it ; and it must depend upon the good pleasure of God whether he will afford men more, or fewer advantages for attaining to knowledge, virtue and happiness. But, notwithstanding this, if the means have been such as would have been effectual, provided there had been no criminal prejudice to frustrate them, men are blamed, and God is just and wise in punishing them, as well as in rewarding those whose minds are so disposed, as to receive advantage from the means of virtue and knowledge which are afforded them.

Now that in this sense the sacred writers considered God as just to all mankind, is evident from the many earnest exhortations and expostulations addressed to sinners in the books of Scripture, and from the blame and reproach which men are represented as incurring, when they continue in vice and ignorance. It is not possible that any persons could be so inconsistent with themselves, as to exhort sinners to repent, and to blame and reproach them for not repenting, if they did not consider them as having a natural power to comply with the exhortation. Nay, in this very passage of the apostle Paul, which is, perhaps, the most favourable to the doctrine of *absolute decrees* of any thing in all the books of Scripture, God is represented as enduring, *with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, which evidently implies that they had sufficient power and time to repent, and to prevent their impending destruction ; and therefore proves that their destruction was not decreed, but in case of their impenitence.

How much soever, therefore, the sacred writers refer to God upon particular occasions, and whatever use they may suppose that his infinite wisdom will make of the errors and vices of some individuals of mankind, in order to promote the interests of truth and virtue more at large, we cannot but conclude, that they considered every man's own determination as final with respect to his future state ; and it is to be observed, that neither the obstinacy of Pharaoh, nor even the infidelity of the Jews, had any necessary con-

nexion with their state after death. The former might be hard-hearted with respect to the Hebrews, and either rewarded for other virtues, or punished for other vices, in a future state; and if the unbelieving Jews were in other respects such men as Paul, who had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge, they may find mercy in the day of judgment. There is not a single passage in the Scriptures which represents the future misery of any individual of mankind as determined by an arbitrary decree of God; but a thousand passages in which it is expressly said, that the future state of all mankind depends entirely upon their own voluntary actions.

After these observations, short remarks on another passage may suffice for the purpose of this section.

Rom. viii. 28—30: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

All that we can fairly infer from this passage is, that the end of the Christian dispensation, or of the calling of mankind to the faith of the gospel, is their sanctification and future glory; for it is manifest that all who are called are not justified. If this term called be restricted in its meaning, let it be restricted by St. Paul himself, viz. to those who love God; which is sufficiently represented as depending upon men themselves, by being the subjects of precept and exhortation. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart," &c.

#### IV. *Of the Divinity of Christ.*

Nothing can be more evident, from the whole tenour of the New Testament, than that the person who is distinguished by the name of the Father is the only true God, exclusive of the Son, or any other being whatever. Nevertheless, there are some single and unconnected passages, especially in our translation of the Bible, which seem to favour the contrary opinion, namely, that of the Divinity of Christ. The intimate union which subsisted between God and Christ, the powers communicated to him by God, especially after his resurrection and ascension, and the distinguished

honours conferred upon him, easily lead us to the genuine sense of the most considerable of these expressions, and make it evident that nothing was meant by them in the least derogatory from the sole proper Divinity, and absolute Supremacy of the Father.

I. Christ being appointed the king and judge of men, has powers given him adapted to those offices, especially a knowledge of the human heart, and the prerogative of declaring the forgiveness of sin, which always accompanies regal authority; but being assisted by divine wisdom and discernment, as well as by divine power, in the exercise of this high office, it is, in effect, the same thing as the judgment and mercy of God, displayed by the instrumentality of Jesus Christ. We ought not, therefore, to be surprised at such expressions as these—Matt. ix. 4: "And Jesus knowing their thoughts." John ii. 25: "He knew what was in man." Matt. ix. 2: "Thy sins be forgiven thee." The multitude, who saw Christ exerting a miraculous power upon this occasion, and heard him express himself in this manner, had no idea of his claiming any extraordinary power as naturally inherent in himself; for it is said, ver. 8, that "when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men." The Scribes and Pharisees, indeed, said within themselves, upon this occasion, ver. 3, "This man blasphemeth." But the Jews called it blasphemy to pretend to be the Christ; for when the high-priest solemnly adjured our Lord "by the living God," Matt. xxvi. 63, that he would tell him whether he was "the Christ, the Son of God," and our Lord expressly replied that he was the Christ, we read, ver. 65, "then the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, he hath spoken blasphemy."

Col. ii. 9: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." This is a very proper expression, being strictly and literally true, though Christ himself was a mere man, since the wisdom and power of the one true God, the Father, were manifest in, and acted by him, agreeably to his own declarations, that the words which he spake were not his own, but the Father's who sent him, and that the Father within him did the works. Nay, this very expression, that the fulness of the godhead dwelled or resided in him, seems to imply that it did not naturally belong to him. Besides, phrases similar to this are applied by way of figure, to Christians in general. They are said to be "partakers of the Divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4, to "be filled with all the

fulness of God," Eph. iii. 19, and to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all," Eph. i. 23.

These observations will easily help us to understand what is meant by Christ being called "the image of the invisible God," Col. i. 15, 2 Cor. iv. 4, "and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3, and also his "being in the form of God," Philip. ii. 6; for they all allude to the divine power and wisdom which were displayed in him when he was on earth, but more especially now that he is ascended into heaven: at the same time, Christ being called only the image of God, is a sufficient intimation that he is not God himself. Indeed, if this expression was to be allowed to be any proof of the Divinity of Christ, it would follow that Adam was God; for it is said, Gen. i. 26, 27, that "God created man in his own image," and *after his likeness*.

It is with as little appearance of reason that Christ is argued to be very and eternal God, because he is styled the Son of God; for all Christians have the same appellation. 1 John iii. 2: "Now are we the sons of God." We are also called not only the children but also the "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Adam is more especially called "the son of God," Luke iii. 38, and *Ephraim* is called his "dear son," Jer. xxxi. 20.

John x. 30: "I and my Father are one." xiv. 10: "I am in the Father, and the Father in me." That is, we are one in design and interest. But whatever be the union between the Father and the Son, it is of such a kind, that his disciples are capable of it with respect to them both; for, in Christ's prayer for his disciples, he says, John xvii. 20—23, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us:—and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

John v. 23: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" that is, *as well as* the Father. The same word is used, where it can have no other sense, in John xvii. 23, "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me;" that is, not in the same degree, but in like manner as. To explain the sense of the entire passage in which the words above-mentioned occur, let it be observed, that the Jews had persecuted Jesus, because he had made a man

whole on the sabbath-day. By way of apology, he says, ver. 17, "My Father worketh hitherto;" that is, in the course of his providence on the sabbath, as well as on other days, and I work; that is, on the sabbath-day also. Upon this the Pharisees were more enraged, *because he called God his Father, and because he made himself* (not equal with God, as we render it) but *like unto God*, assuming so much of his prerogative, as to claim the privilege of working on the sabbath-day as well as God. However, to shew them that he meant nothing arrogant in what he had said, and that this privilege was given to him by God, he immediately replies, ver. 19, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." He then proceeds to represent all his extraordinary power as the gift of his Father, ver. 20—23: "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." Indeed, this very last clause sufficiently shews that the honour to which Christ is entitled is not on account of what he is, or has, of himself, but on account of what he derives from God, as his ambassador.

II. Very high titles are justly given to Christ as the founder of the Christian religion, and especially as superintending the affairs of his church, and as controuling whatever can affect the interest of his church. Thus the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews styles him "the author and finisher of our faith;" Heb. xii. 2. He is also said to be the "head over all things to his church;" Eph. i. 22. These high titles are attributed to Jesus with respect to the state of glory, and universal dominion, to which he is exalted by the Father.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes use of a phrase of the same import with this of the apostle John, where he only means to express the unchangeableness of the doctrine of Christ, as the connexion of it, with what goes before and after, makes very evident. Heb. xiii. 7—9: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, con-

sidering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." The whole is intended to inculcate a steadfast adherence to the genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ.

It is plain, from many passages in the book of Revelation, that the author of it considered Christ as a person subordinate to the Father, and the minister of his will, and therefore no single expression should be interpreted in such a manner as to make it imply the contrary. The very first words of the book sufficiently express this: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him;" ver. 6: who "hath made us kings and priests unto God, and (or rather, even) his Father;" ii. 26, 27. "And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations—even as I received of my Father;" iii. 12. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God;" ver. 21. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Farther, this writer, evidently speaking of Christ in his highest capacity, uses the following expressions, ver. 14: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning (or the most excellent) of the creation of God;" which plainly implies that, how excellent soever he may be, he is but a creature.

Matt. xxviii. 20: "And, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."\* Christ, who is constituted head over all things to his church, undoubtedly takes care of its interests, and attends to whatever concerns his disciples; and being with a person, and taking care of him, are, in the language of Scripture, equivalent expressions. See Gen. xxi. 20, 22, xxviii. 15, xxxix. 2. Besides, Christ, having a near relation to this earth, may even be personally present with his disciples when they little think of it.† But it is by no means necessary that he be personally present every where at the same time; since God may communicate to him a power of knowing distant events, of which he appeared to

\* "And behold! I will be with you continually to the end of the age—meaning the end of the Jewish dispensation." See Wakefield's *Matthew*, p. 414; also on Ch. xiii. 39, p. 198.

† Some of the Author's associates will probably recollect that he was much disposed to indulge this gratifying thought.

be possessed when Lazarus was sick. This is certainly no greater a power than God may communicate to any of his creatures.

Another passage, which seems to suppose the omnipresence of Christ, is, Matt. xviii. 20: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But if we consider the whole of this passage, in which our Lord is speaking of the great power of which his apostles would be possessed, and especially of the efficacy of their prayers, we shall be satisfied, that he could only mean by this form of expression to represent their power with God, when they were assembled as his disciples, and prayed so as became his disciples, to be the same as his own power with God; and God heard him always.\* That our Lord could not intend to speak of himself as *the God who heareth prayer*, is evident from his speaking of the Father, in this very place, as the person who was to grant their petitions; ver. 19: "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

III. Considering the great power with which Christ was invested on earth, and more especially the authority to which he is exalted now that he is in heaven, it is certainly right that a very high degree of respect should be paid to him; and from the manner in which this is expressed, and especially because the word *worship* is made use of on those occasions in our English translation, some persons have been confirmed in their opinion, that he is the proper object of supreme or divine worship, and is therefore truly and properly God;† but any person, who will consider the real import of the following passages, must see that they afford no foundation for such a conclusion.

Heb. i. 6: "When God "bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him." Also the leper, Matt. viii. 2—the ruler, Matt. ix. 18—the woman of Canaan, Matt. xv. 25—the poor people in the ship, Matt. xiv. 33—and his disciples, Matt. xxviii.

\* See Wakefield on *Matthew*, xviii. 20, Note, p. 260.

† The argument of "Christ's high power and authority, as a ground of worship," is well considered in pp. 151—153, 4th Ed. of "*The Apology of Theophilus Lindsey*." That devout and unwearied student of the Scriptures was taught, by the doctrine of Christ, to have no object of religious worship besides *the Father who had sent him*, yet truly honoured *the Son*, by exemplifying his precepts in the benevolent activity of a long life, and relying on his promises during *wearisome nights and months of vanity*. Here it may be allowed to indulge some grateful recollections, and to testify that we have seen.

9—17, are all said to have *worshipped* him. But the very circumstances in which this worship was paid to Christ sufficiently prove that *Divine worship* was not intended; because it is well known that the Jews had no expectation of any other person than a man, for their Messiah; and when Nicodemus was convinced of the miraculous power of Jesus, he concluded, not that he was *God*, but that he must have been *empowered* by God; for he says, John iii. 2, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” Besides, it is well known, that the Greek word, which, in the above-mentioned passages, is rendered *worship*, is frequently used to express a very high degree of respect; but such as may be lawfully paid to men of a proper character and rank. And, indeed, our word *worship*, though it is now appropriated to that worship which is due to God only, was formerly used with greater latitude,\* and even in our translation of the Bible; as when a servant, in one of our Saviour’s parables, is said to have fallen down and worshipped his master, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all:” where certainly Divine worship could not be meant. It is also an evidence of this use of the word, that in our marriage-service the man is directed to say to the woman, “With my body I thee worship;” and the terms *worship*, and *worshipful*, are still applied to several of our magistrates, and bodies of men.

Also, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the same word that we render worship in the New is frequently used where Supreme worship could not be intended. Otherwise Abraham must be supposed to have intended to pay Supreme worship to the angels, when he took them to be men; and to the sons of Heth, when he was making a bargain with them for a piece of ground to bury his dead.

IV. Arguments have been brought to prove the Divinity of Christ from the names and titles which are given to him, as well as from the powers ascribed to him, and the worship that is paid to him; but if we consider the proper meaning of other Scripture-names, and the occasions on which they were conferred, we must be satisfied, that very little stress is to be laid on such an argument as this.

\* So also *adoration*, to describe civil homage paid to a chief magistrate. That learned statesman, of the 16th century, Sir Thomas Smith, thus represents the royal dignity, in the English government: “No man speaketh to the prince, nor serveth at the table, but in adoration and kneeling.” *Commonwealth of England*, B. ii. Ch. iv. 1633, p. 103. See also Mon. Repos. VI. 226.

Isa. vii. 14 : " Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emanuel." Matt. i. 23 : " Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." These texts have been thought to imply that Christ is a compound being, or that he is *God incarnate*; but if we consider other instances of names imposed by the Divine direction in the Scriptures, we shall find that they do not always express any thing characteristic of the person on whom they are imposed, but that they were intended to be a memorial of some divine promise or assurance, respecting things of a public and general concern. Thus the prophet Isaiah, vii. 3, &c. was directed to call his son *Shear-Jashub*, which signifies *a remnant shall return*, to express to the Jews, that only a small number of their enemies should return from the invasion with which they then threatened them, or that a number of their own people who had been carried captive should return. Another child he was directed to call *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, on a similar account; and of Jerusalem it is said, " This is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness," to express that God would appear in that character to his people. In like manner the Divine Being, admitting that he appointed Christ to be called *Emanuel*, might do it to engage to manifest his own presence with his people, by protecting and blessing them, and inflicting vengeance on their enemies and oppressors. For this prediction was given upon the occasion of an invasion by the Israelites and Syrians.

Isa. ix. 6 : " Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace." In this, as in the former case, these titles may not express what Christ is, but what God will manifest himself to be in him, and by him; so that, in the dispensation of the gospel, God, the wise and benevolent author of it, will appear to be a wonderful counsellor, *the everlasting Father*,\* and the prince of peace. If this name be supposed to characterize Christ himself, it will by no means favour the common doctrine of the Trinity;

\* See the Author's Notes. Dr. Clarke, from " the best copies of the LXX," and " the Vulgar Latin," translates " The Father (or Lord) of the age to come." Scrip. Doc. Notes on S. 50, 3d Ed. p. 376. Pope, to whom the *Vulgate* would be a first authority, refers to the text, and describes Christ, in *Messiah*, l. 56, as " The promis'd Father of the future age."

because it will make him to be the *Father*, or the first person, and not the *Son*, or the second person. Besides, whatever powers or dignities are to be possessed by Christ, it is sufficiently intimated in this place, that he does not hold them independent and underived; since he himself, and all the blessings that he bestows, are said to be *given*, that is, by God; and at the conclusion of the prophecy, in the next verse, it is said, that “the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.” I would also observe, that that part of the title on which the greatest stress has been laid may be rendered *the mighty God my Father for ever*, or *the mighty God is my Father for ever*, which is exactly agreeable to many declarations of the Scripture concerning Christ, and his usual title of the Son of God; and to this the angel, in his salutation of Mary, might probably allude, when he said, Luke i. 32, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest;” and it is very observable, that what he adds corresponds most remarkably with the remainder of this very prophecy of Isaiah. The prophet says, ver. 7, “Of the increase of his government, and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” The angel says, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

V. Many of the texts, which are usually alleged in proof of the Divinity of Christ, relate to God the Father only. One of the most remarkable of these is John i. 1—14, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.—And the word was made flesh, and dwelt

among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

These words, interpreted in the most literal manner, only imply that *the word*, or Christ, had a being before the creation of the world; that he had the title of God, or of *a God*, and was the instrument by whom the Supreme God made all things; but they by no means imply that he was true and very God; for magistrates and others are sometimes called gods, on account of their power and dominion, in which they resemble God. Nay, the derivation of Christ from the Father, and consequently his dependence upon him, is sufficiently expressed by his being called, in the last of these verses, "the only-begotten of the Father."

To me, however, it appears, that the apostle does not speak of the pre-existence of Christ in this place; but only of the power and wisdom of God, which dwelled or tabernacled in his flesh; and that he probably meant to condemn some false opinions concerning the *logos* (which is the Greek for word,) which are known to have prevailed in his time. Now, in contradiction to them, the apostle here asserts, that by the word of God, we are not to understand any being distinct from God, but only the power or energy of God, which is so much "with God," that it properly belongs to his nature, and is not at all distinct from God himself; and that the same power which produced all things was manifest to men in the person of Jesus Christ, who was sent to enlighten the world; that though his power made the world, it was not acknowledged by the world, when it was revealed in this manner, not even by God's peculiar people, the Jews; and notwithstanding this power was manifested in a more sensible and constant manner than ever it had been before, dwelling in human flesh, and tabernacled, or abiding, some considerable time among us; so that his glory was beheld, or made visible to mortal eyes, and was full of grace and truth.

Rom. ix. 5: "Whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." This may with equal propriety and truth be rendered, *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever*,\* the former sentence ending with the word *came*; and since no ancient manuscripts are pointed, all the pointings have been made, and the different sentences have been distinguished,

\* See another sense of the passage in Wakefield's *Expository*, pp. 162-172.

as fallible men have thought the best sense required. It affords an argument favourable to my construction of these words, that it is usual with the apostle Paul to break out into a doxology, or form of thanksgiving to God, after mentioning any remarkable instance of his goodness. See Eph. iii. 21, 1 Tim. i. 17, vi. 16: See also 1 Pet. iv. 11. Indeed, it is very common in Jewish writings to add a doxology after barely mentioning the name of God.

1 John v. 20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." This last clause is manifestly explanatory of the title "him that is true," or *the true one*, in the preceding clauses, of whom the Son of God has given us an understanding, or with whom he has made us acquainted. As the word *even* is a mere addition of our translators, instead of "we are in him that is true," *even in* "his Son Jesus Christ," we may read, "we are in him that is true," *in* or *by* "his Son Jesus Christ;" and this makes a far more consistent sense, and may be considered as an allusion to the words of Christ addressed to the Father, and recorded by this very apostle, John xvii. 3: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Without this interpretation, these two texts would flatly contradict one another; for how can the Father be "the only true God," if the Son be *true God* also?

1 Cor. i. 23, 24: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The meaning of this plainly is, that the power and wisdom of God, were displayed in this very circumstance of the crucifixion of Christ, which was such a stumbling-block, and appeared so foolish to men; agreeably to what he immediately adds, "because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." That which the Jews and Greeks had rejected, as foolish and weak, was, in reality, and appeared to those who were called, and who were taught to understand it better, to surpass the wisdom and power of man.

Tit. ii. 13: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In this place God and Christ are mentioned as distinct persons, the judgment of the world being some-

times ascribed to the one, and sometimes to the other ; which is easily accounted for by considering that, in that great day, Christ acts by commission from God, and will come in the glory of his Father, and of the holy angels, as well as in his own glory, upon that most solemn occasion.

John xx. 28 : " Thomas answered, and said unto him, my Lord, and my God." This is an abrupt exclamation, and no connected sentence at all, and seems to have proceeded from a conviction, suddenly produced in the apostle's mind, that he who stood before him was, indeed, his Lord and master, raised to life by the power of God. The resurrection of Christ and the power of God had so near a connexion, that a conviction of the one could not but be attended with an acknowledgment of the other ; and therefore they are frequently mentioned together, the one as the *cause*, and the other as the *effect*. Rom. i. 4 : " Declared to be the Son of God with power—by the resurrection from the dead." vi. 4 : " Raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." x. 9 : " If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Here we plainly see, that he only who raised Christ from the dead is styled *God*, and not Christ, who was raised by his power.

1 Tim. vi. 13—16 : " I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords ; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see : to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen." The meaning of this passage, as the construction of the words in the original incontestibly proves, is as follows : which *appearing*, or second coming of Christ to judge the world, he who is the blessed and only potentate, that is, the only true God, the Father, shall shew, or declare. And this exactly agrees with what our Lord himself says, that the day and hour of this his appearing was not known either to the angels of God, or to himself, but to the Father only ; and consequently he only could shew or declare it. Besides, the very verses I quoted above sufficiently demonstrate, that the writer of them considered God and Christ as distinct persons. *I*

*charge thee in the sight of God and before Jesus Christ ; and how could he with truth say of Christ, that no man had seen him or could see him ?*

Heb. i. 10: "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," &c. As there are several expressions in the first part of this chapter which are not easy to be understood, I shall give a brief explanation of them all, in their order. The great objection which the Jews made to Christianity being the meanness of Christ's appearance, and the ignominious death that he suffered ; to obviate this, the author of this epistle begins with representing the great dignity to which, for the suffering of death, Christ is now exalted at the right-hand of God. Having said, ver. 2, that "God—hath in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son," he immediately adds, "whom he hath appointed heir (or Lord) of all things ; by whom also he made (or appointed, not the material *worlds*, but) the *ages* ;" that is, the present dispensation of God's government over mankind ; which is established by the gospel, the administration of which is committed to the Son : "Who being the brightness of his (that is, *God's*) glory, and the express image of his (that is, *God's*) person, and upholding all things by the word of his (that is, *God's*) power, &c. sat down on the right-hand of the majesty on high." It is plain from this passage, that whatever Christ is, he is by Divine appointment ; "whom he hath *appointed* heir of all things."

Afterwards this writer proceeds to prove that Christ is superior to angels ; and at the close of this argument he has these words, "but unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;" or, as it may be rendered, *God is thy throne \* for ever and ever* ; that is, God will establish the authority of Christ, till time shall be no more. "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." From this passage nothing can be more plain, than that, whatever authority belongs to Christ, he has a superior, from whom he derives it ; God, even thy God, has anointed thee. This could never have been said of the one true God, whose being and power are underived.

In verses 10—12, the apostle quotes an address to God,

\* "God thy throne shall be." Matthews's (Tindal's) Translation, 1537.

as the great Creator and everlasting Ruler of the universe, but without any hint of its being applied to Christ, from Psalm cii. 25—27: “And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.” This quotation was probably made with a view to express the great honour conferred on Christ, on account of the dignity of the person who conferred it. For it immediately follows, ver. 13, “But to which of the angels said he,” that is, the great Being to whom this description belongs, “Sit on my right-hand until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool?” Or, since this quotation from the Psalmist describes a perpetuity of empire in God, it may be intended to intimate a perpetuity of empire in Christ, who holds his authority from God, and who must hold it, unless God himself be unable to support it.

Acts xx. 28: “Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” In the most ancient manuscripts this text is, *Feed the church of the Lord*; which generally signifies Christ. Also in some copies it is, *which he purchased with his blood*; that is, the blood of his Son. *As the blood of God* is a phrase which occurs no where else in the Scriptures, we ought to be exceedingly cautious how we admit such an expression. If Christ was God, his blood could not be his blood as God, but as man.

VI. I shall here introduce a few texts, which are not reducible to any of the above-mentioned heads, being either interpolations, or mis-translations of the Scriptures; or having no relation to the subject, in favour of which they have been quoted.

Matt. xxviii. 19: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This form of baptism seems to be intended to remind Christians of the different parts which God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, acted in the scheme of man’s redemption; God sending his Son on this gracious errand; the Son faithfully performing the work which God gave him to do, and being made head over all things to the church; and the Holy Spirit confirming the word of truth by miraculous gifts. But it is quite an arbitrary supposition, that, because they are mentioned together upon this occasion, they must be equal in all other

respects, partaking of Divinity alike, so as to be equal in power and glory. The apostle Paul says, '1 Cor. x. 2, that the children of Israel "were all baptized unto Moses:" but he certainly did not mean that Moses was their God.\*

Col. iii. 10, 11: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all;" that is, there is no other distinction to be made now, but only whether a man be a real Christian.

1 Cor. i. 2: "With all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours." That adoration, such as is due to the one living and true God, was not meant by the apostle in this place, is evident from the very next words; "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ;" where Christ is evidently spoken of as distinct from God. It is probable, therefore, that the apostle meant nothing more than such as call themselves by the name of Christ, or who professed Christianity.

Acts vii. 59: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The word *God* is not in the original, as our translators have signified, by their directing it to be printed in the italic character, so that this text by no means implies that Stephen acknowledged Christ to be God, but only informs us, that Stephen addressed himself to Christ whom he had just seen in person, in a state of great exaltation and glory; as we read, ver. 55, 56: "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right-hand of God; and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." This very language clearly implies, that he considered *the Son of Man*, and *God*, as distinct persons.

The word, which is here, and in 1 Cor. i. 2, rendered to *call upon*, is far from being appropriated to invocation, as peculiar to the Divine Being. It is the same word that is rendered to appeal to, as when Paul appeals to Cæsar; and is used when a person is said to be called by any particular name; as Judas called Iscariot, &c. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that it has the same meaning both in

\* See Wakefield's "Plain and Short Account," p. 47, and his *Matthew*, p. 413.

1 Cor. i. 2, and also in Acts ix. 21: "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem?" That is, all who called themselves *Christians*. It is so rendered James ii. 7: "Do not they blaspheme that worthy Name by which ye are called?" Or, as it is more exactly rendered, which is *called* or imposed, *upon you*? That is, by which ye are distinguished. Had it implied adoration, it would at least have been, which is called upon by you.

1 John v. 7: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." Sir Isaac Newton, and others, have clearly proved that this verse was no part of John's original epistle, but was inserted in later ages.\* It is not to be found in any ancient manuscript, and has been omitted in many printed copies and translations of the New Testament, at a time when the doctrine which it is supposed to contain was in a manner universally received; I say *supposed* to contain, because in fact it expresses no more than that these three agree in giving the same testimony, which is the only kind of union which the spirit, the water, and the blood, in the verse following can have.†

1 Tim. iii. 16: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Sir Isaac Newton has fully demonstrated that, in the original, this text was not *God* manifest in the flesh, but "which was manifested in the flesh;" ‡ and a very small alteration in the manner of writing Greek is sufficient for that purpose. The oldest manuscript in the world, § which I have examined myself, has been manifestly altered from the one to the other, as appears by the difference in the colour of the ink.

\* See "An Historical Account of two notable Corruptions of Scripture, in a Letter to a Friend," in Sir Isaac Newton's Works, (1785, 4to. V. p. 494,) edited by Dr. afterwards Bishop Horsley, who, instead "of a very imperfect copy of these Tracts," published in 1754, printed them *entire* from "the Author's MS." They were republished by the late Mr. Matthews, in his *Recorder*, 1803, II. p. 182. See also Lindsey's *Historical View*, p. 402, and Mon. Repos. XI. p. 220, and XII. p. 591.

† Calvin, as quoted by Simon, says, "the expression *three are one*, does not denote the essence, but the consent." *Crit. Hist.* 4to. 1689. Pt. ii. p. 14. See also Mon. Repos. XII. p. 530.

‡ He says, "this is the common reading of the Ethiopic, Syriac and Latin versions to this day; Jerome's manuscripts having given him no occasion to correct the old vulgar Latin in this place." He adds that, "with the ancients versions agree the writers of the first five centuries." *Hist. Acc. in loco*. See also the Author's *Notes*. Throughout the *Roman Church* they read, according to the *Vulgate*, "*quod manifestatum est in carne*."

§ Probably the *Alexandrian* in the *Museum*; since published by Dr. Woide.

Besides, it is even literally true that God was manifest in the flesh of Christ, since he himself acknowledges that *the very words which he spake were not his own, but the Father's who sent him*, and that *the Father, who was in him, did the works*. It was, therefore, with the greatest propriety that our Lord said, John viii. 19, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also," the wisdom and power of God being conspicuous in him. They who will have this text to be a proof of the godhead of Christ, must suppose him to be the *Father*, or the first Person in the Trinity, and not the *Son*, or the second.

Zach. xiii. 7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." So says our English version, but the word in the original signifies a person that is *near*, or *joined in neighbourhood* to another, and, except this single text, it is every where rendered *neighbour* by our translators.

Philip. ii. 5: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation;—Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.—That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The proper rendering of this text is, "Who, being in the form of God," *did not think that being equal to God*, or a state of equality with God, *was a thing to be seized* (i. e. by him), "but made himself of no reputation." This makes the whole passage perfectly just and coherent, as a recommendation of humility; and also hints a fine contrast between the conduct of Christ, whom St. Paul elsewhere calls the second Adam, and the first, who is also said to have been made in the likeness of God, but aspiring to be *as God*, fell, and was punished; whereas Christ, who had more of the likeness or *form of God*, on account of his extraordinary powers, not grasping at any thing higher, but humbling himself, was exalted. It is in this sense, or a sense similar to it, in which this very text is quoted by those fathers of the Christian church who wrote before the controversy about the Divinity of Christ was started. In this manner even some who maintain the Divinity of Christ render the words. Thus, Father Simon, who contends that being in the form of God is equivalent to being truly God, renders the latter part of the verse, "did not imperiously assume to himself an equality with God." Indeed the word *but*, which introduces the next verse, evidently leads us to expect some

contrast between what goes before and after it, which is very striking in the manner in which I translate this text; but it is altogether lost in our common version. For *he made himself equal to God, but humbled himself*, is not even sense. Lastly, I would observe that the word, which is here rendered *equal to*, is also used to express a very high degree of resemblance, which it is very certain that Christ was possessed of with respect to God; and Dr. Doddridge renders it "to be as God." \*

VII. Christ may be supposed to have pre-existed, or to have had a being before he was born of the virgin Mary, without supposing him to be the eternal God; but it appears to me that the apostles considered Christ as being, with respect to his *nature*, truly and properly *a man*, consisting of the same constituent parts, and of the same rank with ourselves, "in all things like unto his brethren;" and the texts which are thought to speak of him as having existed before he came into this world, appear to me to bear other interpretations very well. Some of them have been explained in a different sense already, and I shall now endeavour to explain the rest.

John viii. 56—58: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." The meaning of this passage clearly is, that Abraham foresaw the day of Christ, and that Christ was the subject of prophecy before the times of Abraham. This saying of our Lord is also illustrated by what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says concerning all the ancient worthies, viz. that they "all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." In this manner, therefore, Abraham also saw the day of Christ. † Agreeably to this, it is easy to explain John xvii. 5, "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was," of the glory which was intended for him in the councils of God before all time. Nay, this must necessarily be our Lord's meaning in this place, since in many other passages the power and glory which were conferred

\* See, on the passage, Wakefield's *Enquiry*, pp. 183—200.

† Mr. Wakefield remarks "the same anticipation in that grand passage of Heb. xii. 22—25, and a multiplicity of others." He adds that, "in this very chapter, Abraham's conviction of a future Saviour was so strong, that he is said to have seen the day of his coming, as if it had actually arrived." *Enquiry*, pp. 129, 130.

upon Christ are expressly said to be the reward of his obedience, and to be subsequent to his resurrection from the dead. It is with peculiar propriety, therefore, that this request of our Lord follows his declaration, that he had done the work for which he was to receive the reward; ver. 4, 5, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me," &c. As the connexion of this prayer shews, that whatever it was that our Lord requested, it depended upon the part which he had to act in the world, it is plain that it could not be any thing which he had enjoyed antecedently to his coming into it.

In the same manner we may explain the following prophecy of Micah, concerning Christ, v. 2: "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." For, this may be understood concerning the promises of God, in which the coming of Christ was signified to mankind from the beginning of the world. The Chaldee paraphrase renders it, *whose name was foretold of old*.

As to those who think that our Lord meant to intimate that he was truly and properly God because he uses that expression *I am*, by which the true God announced himself to Moses, \* they will perhaps be sensible how little stress is to be laid upon it, when they are informed that, though the same phrase occurs very often in the history of Christ, our translators themselves in every place excepting this, render it by *I am he*, that is, I am the Christ. It is used in this sense in the 24th verse of this chapter: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And again in the 28th verse: "When ye have lift up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he." That the words *I am* in this place do not mean the eternal God, is manifest from the words which are immediately connected with these; "then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things."

John xvi. 28: "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." In order to understand this text, it should be observed, that by the world is not always meant the *material*

\* See on the translation of Exod. iii. 14, Wakefield's *Enquiry*, p. 126.

world, and least of all, in the discourses of our Saviour; but the world considered as a state of trial, exercise and discipline, and especially the unbelieving and ungodly part of the world. "The world hateth you," John xv. 19. "I pray not for the world," xvii. 9, &c. Our Saviour also speaks of sending his disciples into the world; though, considered as a part of the material system, they had been in it long before. John xvii. 18: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Since, therefore, the mission of Christ, and that of the apostles, are spoken of in the very same words, and represented as commencing in the same manner, there can be no more reason to suppose that Christ had a being before he came into the world, than there is to suppose that the apostles had pre-existed. Also when our Lord says, John xvii. 11, "Now I am no more in the world," he could not mean the material world: for, after his resurrection, he was seen by many, and even after his ascension he was seen by Paul, if not by Stephen; and he is probably in this world at present, attending to the affairs of his church,\* and therefore may even be literally with his disciples, upon important occasions, "even to the end of the world;" and the notion of a local heaven, above the clouds, is altogether fanciful.

John iii. 13: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven." This language is evidently figurative;† but if Christ could be in heaven at the same time that he was on earth, conversing with Nicodemus, it is plain that his being said to have come down from heaven cannot necessarily imply that he had ever been any where but on the earth. In fact, the phrases *being in heaven*, *being with God*, or *in the bosom of God*, &c. express a state of very intimate communication with God, such as qualified Christ to speak of heavenly things, as he expresses himself to Nicodemus, and to make his Father known to us. John i. 8: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

The omnipresence, and consequently the proper Divinity

\* See p. 453, and the Note †.

† F. Socinus, understanding this passage and John vi. 62, literally, conjectured that "Christ, before he entered on the office assigned him by his Father, was, in consequence of the Divine counsel and agency, in heaven and remained there for some time." Toulmin's *Socinus*, p. 182.

of Christ, could not be meant by his being said to be in heaven at the same time that he was visible on earth, because he is, on this occasion, called *the Son of Man*, which is always allowed to denote his humanity, and which certainly could not be present in two places at the same time.

John vi. 51—53: “I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.—Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” By these and other expressions of a similar nature, our Lord staggered not only those who followed him for the sake of the loaves with which he had fed them, but even many of his other disciples; and perceiving this, he says unto them, ver. 61—63, “Doth this offend you? *What* and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” In this our Lord seems to be reproofing the stupidity of his disciples, in not understanding that by *himself*, and his *flesh* and *blood*, he meant his *doctrine*, which came down from heaven. For if it was his body that was to be of such benefit to mankind, what would they say if they should see it taken from them, ascending into heaven, from whence he had spoken of its descending to be the life of the world? They must then be satisfied that his flesh could profit them nothing, and therefore must conclude that his doctrine must have been the spirit, and the life, of which he spake. Or we may, perhaps, understand our Saviour in this place, as referring to his ascension, which was an ocular proof of his having had that intimate communication with God, and having been sent of God, concerning which he had been speaking. Besides, if this passage be interpreted literally, it will imply that the body of Christ came from heaven, which is not pretended.

Col. i. 15—19: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all

things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."

In this passage we have a view given us of the great dignity and dominion to which Christ is exalted by his Father, and of the great and happy change that was made in this world by his gospel; for by *creation* we are to understand the *new creation*, or *renovation*, in which sense the same word is used by the apostle, when he says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. 10. So great a change is produced in the world, in the tempers and conduct of men by the gospel, that both the terms *creation* and *regeneration* are made use of to express it. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3; so that by *regeneration*, or *new creation*, we are to understand a *new-modeling*, or *new-constituting*. We shall see less harshness in this figure, when we consider, that what is called the Mosaic creation was probably similar to this; since, for any thing we know, it was only the *re-making*, or *re-constituting* of the world, out of a former chaos.

There are several passages in which the words, which we generally render to create, or creation, signify only a renewal or restoration. Eph. ii. 15: "To make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." 2 Cor. v. 17: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." In 1 Pet. ii. 13, the same word is rendered *ordinance*: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." The places in which the influence of the gospel is termed a new creation are illustrated by the following prophecy of Isaiah, in which it is described in the same language; Isa. lxv. 17, 18, "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

The word *all* must necessarily respect the subject concerning which the affirmation is made, and be limited by it. Thus when "all the world" is said to be taxed, Luke ii. 1, it is plain that nothing but the *Roman empire* could be understood. In like manner, when all things are said to be created by Christ, or for him, and also when all things are said to be *subject to him*, or *put under his feet*, nothing can be meant but such things as can properly come under his government as the Messiah, and be subservient to him in the conduct of it, including probably the visible powers and

kingdoms of this world, and the invisible administration of angels; and therefore the apostle, with great propriety, concludes and sums up the whole of Christ's authority, by saying that "he is the head of the body the church."

*Before* often signifies before in point of rank and pre-eminence, and not in point of time; so that when Christ is said to be "before all things," the meaning is, that he is the chief, or most excellent of all. And when it is said that "by him all things consist," we are to understand, that in him all things are completed and compacted; since the Christian dispensation is the last, and most perfect of all, completing one great and regular scheme of revelation, continually advancing from the more imperfect to the more perfect. I would further observe, that the things here said to be created by Christ are not *material* things, as the *heaven* and the *earth*, but things *in* heaven and earth, as thrones, principalities, &c., and therefore are naturally interpreted, of that power and dignity to which he is advanced, and which is denoted by God's giving him "all power in heaven and on earth," after his resurrection.

We shall have a clearer understanding of this passage in the epistle to the Colossians, if we compare it with a parallel passage in the epistle of the same apostle to the Ephesians, i. 17—23: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom, that ye may know—the exceeding greatness of his power,—which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." In this passage we see most clearly that all the power and authority to which Christ is advanced is subsequent to his resurrection.\*

The origin and extent of the power of Christ are also most distinctly expressed, Philip. ii. 8—11, "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,

\* See Wakefield's *Enquiry*, pp. 220—226, and Mr. Tyrrwhitt's *Discourse* "On the Creation of all Things by the Man Christ Jesus." Digitized by Google

and things in earth; and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

To the same purpose also, 1 Pet. i. 20, 21: "Who (*Christ*) verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." I should think it hardly possible to read this single passage with attention, and not see that the writer of it considered Christ as a being distinct from God, and subordinate to him; that all his glory was subsequent to his resurrection; and also, that, though he was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world," he was not *manifested*, or brought into being, till "these last times," or those of the gospel.

There are some other passages in the New Testament, which are similar to those which I have quoted above, and may serve to illustrate them. John xvi. 15: "All things that the Father hath are mine." xvii. 10: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." 1 Cor. viii. 6: "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

That there is nothing, in any of the passages which I have now quoted, that implies any proper Divinity in Christ, is sufficiently evident, even without the addition of such expressions as directly assert the contrary; as when the apostle Paul says, that "to us there is one God, even the Father;" and our Saviour calls his Father "the only true God." To signify that the authority of Christ is not un-derived, like that of God; and at the same time to inform us from whence it does proceed, the apostle says, that "it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." In the very same language our Saviour speaks of his disciples, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

## V. *Of the Doctrine of Atonement.*

The death of Christ being an event of the greatest consequence to the end of his coming into the world, and being, at the same time, the great stumbling-block both to the Jews and the Gentiles, who could not easily reconcile themselves to the notion of a suffering Saviour, it is no wonder

that the writers of the New Testament speak much of it, and represent it in a great variety of lights, and especially such as would appear the most favourable to the Christian converts. In this case we naturally expect bold comparisons and allusions, especially considering how much more figurative is the style of the books of Scripture, and indeed of all Oriental writings, than ours. But in whatever lights the sacred writers represent the death of Christ, there is resemblance enough sufficiently to justify the representation, at the same time that this event being compared to so many things, and things of such different natures, proves that the resemblance in all of them is only in certain respects, and that they differ considerably in others.

For example, the death of Christ is compared to a sacrifice in general, because he gave up his life in the cause of virtue and of God; and more especially a sacrifice for sin, because his death and resurrection were necessary to the confirmation of that gospel, by which sinners are brought to repentance, and thereby reconciled to God. It is called a *curse*, because he died in a state of suspension, which was by the Jews appropriated to those persons who were considered as reprobated by God; and it is called a *passover*, because it may be considered as a sign of our deliverance from the power of sin, as the passover among the Jews was a sign of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. It is also called a *ransom*, because we are delivered by the gospel from sin and misery. On the same account, he is said by his death to *bear*, or *take away* our sins, since his gospel delivers us from the power of sin, and consequently from the punishment due to it.

These are all bold, but significant figures of speech, the death of Christ really corresponding to them all to a certain degree, but they differ so very widely from one another, that no one thing can correspond to any of them throughout; for then it must exclude all, or at least most of the rest. The same thing, for instance, could not be a curse and a sacrifice; because every thing accursed was considered as an abomination in the sight of God, and could never be brought to the altar; and the killing of the paschal lamb was a thing essentially different from a sacrifice for sin.

These observations appear to me to be a sufficient guide to the interpretation of all the language of the New Testament respecting the death of Christ, without supposing that it had any proper influence upon God, so as to render him propitious to his offending creatures, or that it made it

consistent with the Divine justice to forgive the sins of mankind ; which is contrary to a thousand plain and express declarations of Scripture, which represent God as being essentially, and of himself, merciful and gracious, without the least reference to any other being or agent whatever, and as forgiving freely, and gratuitously, upon our repentance and amendment, without any other atonement or satisfaction. I shall therefore content myself with reciting a few of the passages in which the death of Christ is represented in these several lights.

Eph. v. 2 : " Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Heb. vii. 27 : " Who needeth not daily to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people. For this he did once, when he offered up himself." With the same idea he says, ix. 22, " And without shedding of blood is no remission." This view of the death of Christ occurs pretty frequently in this epistle to the Hebrews, but not more than about half a dozen times in all the other books of the New Testament ; the principal of which is 1 John ii. 2 : " And he is the propitiation for our sins." But if the great object of the death of Christ was the establishment of that religion by which the world is reformed, in consequence of which the Divine Being is rendered propitious to them, how natural is it to represent his death as a *sacrifice* to God for that great purpose ? Besides, sacrifices for sin under the law of Moses are never considered as standing in the place of the sinner ; but as the people were never to approach the Divine presence, upon any occasion, without some offering, agreeably to the standing and universal custom of the East, with respect to all sovereigns and great men,\* so no person after being unclean (which not only moral guilt, but a number of things absolutely indifferent to morality were supposed to render a man) could be introduced to the tabernacle or temple-service, without an offering proper to the occasion.

This idea may explain 2 Cor. v. 21 : " He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him ;" because by *sin* in this place may perhaps be understood a *sin-offering*. Or it may correspond to Rom. viii. 3 : " What the law could not do, in that it was weak, through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (on

\* See the Story of a Persian Peasant, p. 325.

*account of sin, or on the business of sin, i. e. to destroy and take it away) 'condemned sin in the flesh.'* In this case, the sense of the passage will be, that Christ was made, not *sin*, but "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that is, he was made *a man* for our sakes.

Many persons are carried away by the sound of the word redemption, as if it necessarily implied that, mankind being in a state of bondage, a price must be paid for their freedom, and that the death of Christ was that price. But the word which we render redemption signifies only deliverance in general, in whatever manner it be effected, and it is frequently so rendered by our translators. Belonging to this class of texts are the following, Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." 1 Tim. ii. 6: "Who gave himself a ransom for all."

In order to judge of the meaning of this expression, let the preceding passages be compared with the following, in which the same Greek word is used, Luke xxiv. 21: "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed (or, as it might have been translated, delivered) Israel." In this case, the disciples certainly meant a deliverance, or redemption, from a state of subjection to the Romans, which they could not suppose was to be effected by *purchase*, but by the exertion of wisdom and power. Luke i. 68: "He hath visited, and redeemed his people;" which is explained in ver. 71, by *a deliverance*, "that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us." In Acts vii. 35, Stephen styles Moses "a ruler and deliverer," or *redeemer*; but what price did he pay for their redemption? In the Old Testament also God is frequently said to have *redeemed* Israel from the hand of the Egyptians; but he certainly did not redeem them by paying any price for their redemption, and much less by becoming a bondman in their place; but, as it is often expressed, he redeemed or delivered them, with a high hand and an outstretched arm. So also may Christ be said to redeem or deliver from sin, viz. by his precepts, by his example, and by the precious promises of his gospel; by the consideration of which we are induced to forsake sin.

Stress has been laid upon the word *for* in the above-mentioned passages, as if Christ dying a ransom for all, necessarily implied that he died *in the stead*, or *in the place* of all; but the same word has other significations, as *because*, and so it is rendered Luke i. 20: "Because thou

believest not my words." Heb. xii. 2: "Who for (or *because of*) the joy that was set before him." It also signifies *on the behalf*, or *on the account of*, as Matt. xvii. 27: "That take, and give unto them for me and thee," that is, *on the account of*, not *instead of* me and thee. So Christ died, and gave his life a ransom, not instead of many, but *on the behalf of many*, or *for their benefit*.

Much stress has also been laid on Christ being said to bear the sins of mankind; as if they had been ascribed or imputed to him, and he had taken them upon himself, and suffered the wrath of God for them. Isa. liii. 11: "He shall bear their iniquities." 1 Pet. ii. 24: "Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Heb. ix. 28: "So Christ was once offered, to bear the sins of many."

These, I think, are all the places in which this particular view of the death of Christ occurs. But beside the manifest injustice, and indeed absurdity, of an innocent person being punished for one that is guilty, the word does not signify to bear or *take upon another*, but to *bear away*, or to *remove*, by whatever means; so that the texts above-mentioned correspond to 1 John iii. 5: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

The phrase *bearing sin* is never applied in the Old Testament but to the *scape-goat*, which was not sacrificed, but turned loose in the wilderness, to signify the removal of the sins of the people, which God had freely forgiven, to a place where they should never more be heard of. The goat itself, which was emblematically said to *bear* their sins, suffered nothing in consequence of it; but, as its name imports, was suffered to escape, or was let loose. Perhaps the sending away of the scape-goat was intended for a monitory sign to the people, that they should cease to commit those sins which had been so solemnly confessed over him, and which he was said to "bear upon him unto a land of separation." See Levit. xvi. 22, in the margin.

The evangelist Matthew had, most evidently, this idea of the meaning of the passage in Isaiah, when he applied it upon the occasion of Christ's healing the bodily diseases of men, viii. 17: For he says that he performed these cures, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Now how did Christ *bear* the bodily diseases which he cured? Not, surely, by taking them upon him-

himself, and becoming diseased, as the poor wretches themselves had been ; but by removing them by his miraculous power. In like manner Christ bears or takes away sin in general ; not by suffering himself to be treated as a sinner, but removing it by the doctrines and motives of his gospel. Agreeably to this, when Peter had said, " Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree," he explains his meaning in the words next following ; " that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness."

Christ is said to die a curse for us, in Gal. iii. 13: " Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now it is proper enough to say, that Christ died a curse, because the manner of his death was similar to that by which those who were deemed *cursed* under the law were put to death. But if by *accursed* we mean lying under the displeasure of God, this was so far from being the case with respect to Christ and his death, that in this very circumstance he was the object of the Divine approbation and complacency in the highest degree ; as he himself says, John x. 17, " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life:" and it is a general observation in the Scriptures, that " precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

Christ is called a passover, in 1 Cor. v. 7: " Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:" and this view is also alluded to when it is said, John xix. 36, " A bone of him shall not be broken." The reason of this view of the death of Christ was sufficiently intimated before.

As a proof that Christ took our sins upon him, and that we, on the other hand, are justified by the *imputation* of his righteousness to us, some allege Jer. xxiii. 6: " And this is his name whereby he shall be called, *the Lord our Righteousness*." But, according to the method of interpreting Scripture names, explained above, all that we can infer from this text is, that God will be our Righteousness, or receive us into his grace and favour by means of Christ, or by the gospel of Christ. That we must understand this text in some such sense as this, is evident from the same name being afterwards applied to Jerusalem, Jer. xxxiii. 16: " This is the name wherewith she shall be called, *the Lord our Righteousness*:" for certainly it cannot be thought that the merits of Jerusalem are imputed to mankind.

Many divines, finding themselves obliged to give up the notion of Christ's suffering in our stead, and our being jus-

tified by his righteousness, as contrary to the genuine sense of the Scriptures, allege, however, that God forgives the sins of mankind on account of the *merit* of Christ, and his *intercession* for us; and this opinion, like the former, is favoured by the literal sense of a few passages of Scripture: but it is contrary to the general and plain tenour of it, which represents all acts of mercy as proceeding from the essential placability and goodness of God the Father only. Besides, there are many passages in the Old Testament in which God is represented as forgiving the Israelites, and receiving them into his favour, on the account of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and their posterity plead the merit of these their religious ancestors in their prayers. God is also represented as ready to forgive the people of Sodom at the intercession of Abraham. Admitting, therefore, that God may grant favours to mankind at the intercession of Christ, this is not a privilege peculiar to Christ, but is common to him and other good men who went before him; so that the general system, of the forgiveness of sin, can by no means depend upon the merit and intercession of Christ only.

The following passages seem to represent the Divine Being as dispensing mercy to mankind on the account of Christ; 1 John ii. 12: "Because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Rom. viii. 34: "Who also maketh intercession for us." 1 Cor. vi. 11: "But ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." Heb. vii. 25: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

But let these passages be compared with the following from the Old Testament; Gen. xxvi. 24: "Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed, for my servant Abraham's sake." Moses, pleading in behalf of the Israelites, says, Exod. xxxii. 13, "Remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, thy servants." Deut. ix. 27: "Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their—sin." There are many other passages to the same purpose with these.

It must also be observed, that *in the name of Christ*, which occurs in some of the above-mentioned passages, means *as Christ*, or *in the place of Christ*. Thus our Lord says, Matt. xxiv. 5, "Many shall come in my name," that is, pretending to be what I am, the Messiah; and again, John xiv. 26, "the comforter,—whom the Father will send in my name," that is, *in my place*, as it were, to succeed me in his kind offices to you. Praying, therefore, *in the name of Christ* may

mean, in allusion to this sense of it, praying with the temper and disposition of Christ, or as becomes Christians, those who follow the directions of Christ, both with respect to prayer and every other duty of the Christian life. So also being *justified* in the name of Christ, may signify our being justified, or approved of God, in consequence of our being Christians, in deed and in truth, having the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus. Agreeably to this, the apostle Paul exhorts us, Rom. xiii. 14, "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," as if it were to appear like him, the very same person.

If the pardon of sin had universally depended upon the *advocateship* of Christ only, it can hardly be supposed that the spirit would have had that name given to him, and especially by way of eminence and distinction; for the word which we render *comforter* is the same that is rendered *advocate* in 1 John ii. 1: "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The spirit is also said to intercede for us, Rom. viii. 26: "The spirit itself maketh intercession for us."

Besides, the passages in which any regard is supposed to be had to the merit or intercession of Christ, in dispensing mercy to sinners, are exceedingly few, in comparison with those which represent this free gift as proceeding from God only; and in some of them we are misled by our translation, as in Eph. iv. 32: "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath freely forgiven you." It ought to have been rendered as God *in Christ*, that is, in the gospel of Christ, has forgiven you.\* Besides, the word which is here rendered *forgive* signifies *conferring favours* in general, and not the forgiveness of sin in particular; and the whole passage was intended to inculcate a benevolent disposition, in imitation of God, who had conferred the most valuable favours upon mankind, in the gospel of Christ.

Many passages in which we are said to be "justified by faith," and "not by the works of the law," were intended to oppose the doctrine of the Jews, who maintained that the observance of the law of Moses was absolutely necessary to salvation. Writing upon this subject, the apostle Paul expresses himself in the following manner, Rom. iii. 21—28: "But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."

If we consider the whole of this passage, and the connexion in which it stands, we shall be satisfied, that the apostle is here asserting that, in the gospel of Christ, which was confirmed by his death and resurrection, the Divine Being, as from *a mercy-seat* (which the word ought to be rendered, and not *propitiation*) declares his goodness and mercy to mankind; and since the Patriarchs, who believed and obeyed before the law, were justified without the works of the law, so God, acting still upon the same maxims, is just, and the Jews have no reason to complain of it, when he justifies sinners who believe and obey, *freely*, and *without the works of the law of Moses*, under the gospel.

*N. B.* I do not pretend that this pamphlet contains an illustration of *all* the texts that have been urged in favour of the doctrines which are controverted in the *Appeal*; for then I must have written a commentary upon the whole Bible, as there is hardly a text in which some persons do not imagine that they see their own peculiar sentiments; but I think I have taken notice of all that can well be said to be of much consequence. If any considerable omission be pointed out to me, it shall be supplied in future editions.

## A PRAYER,

*Respecting the Present State of Christianity.*

ALMIGHTY God, the giver of all good, and especially *the Father of lights*, and the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge; we thank thee that *thou hast put a spirit in man, and*

*that thine inspiration giveth us understanding*; that, being formed after thine own image, we find ourselves possessed of a nature superior to that of brute creatures; and being endowed with the faculty of reason are capable of investigating important truth, and of governing our conduct, so as to attain to very distinguished degrees of excellence and happiness.

We thank thee that, in aid of this *light of nature*, thou hast superadded the gift of *Revelation*; having, from time to time, communicated to mankind, by thy servants the prophets, the most useful information concerning thy nature, perfections and government, concerning our duty here, and our expectations hereafter. And we more especially rejoice that, upon every occasion of thy gracious intercourse with mankind, thou hast represented thyself to us as the proper object of our reverence, love and confidence; as a Being of boundless goodness, and the greatest compassion to those frailties and infirmities to which it has seemed good to thy wisdom to subject us; as one who expectest no more of us than thou hast enabled us to perform; and who, upon our sincere return to our duty, art ever ready to extend the freest mercy and forgiveness towards us, even after our most aggravated and repeated offences.

We thank thee, more especially, for the last and most perfect revelation of thy will to mankind, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, in whom it hath *pleased* thee, that *all fulness should dwell*; who has established, upon the surest foundations, the great and important doctrines of the proper unity and mercifulness of thy nature, and thy unrivalled supremacy with respect to himself, as well as to all other beings, and all other things; and who has likewise given to us the most satisfactory assurance of a resurrection from the dead, confirmed to us by his own death and resurrection; whereby we are encouraged to expect, that, because he lives, we shall live also.

It has seemed good to thy unsearchable wisdom (which permits the rise and continuance of evil, in order, we doubt not, to bring about the greatest good), that this most excellent religion, so honourable to thee, and so beneficial to mankind, should, by means of the base artifices of some, and the general ignorance which lately overspread the world, become grossly corrupted; whereby such opinions have prevailed among the professors of Christianity, as greatly dishonour thy nature, imply the most unjust reflections on thy righteous moral government, and are highly injurious to the

virtue and happiness of men. How has the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed !

The great and important doctrine of thy Divine Unity has been generally abandoned, and objects of supreme worship multiplied. Thy messenger and servant, the meek and humble Jesus, who, upon all occasions, referred his wisdom and mighty works to thee, his God and Father, speaking and acting by him, has been advanced to proper equality with thyself; and even his mother, Mary, and innumerable saints and angels, have likewise been addressed, as if they were omnipresent beings. By thus dividing thy being, robbing thee of thy essential attributes and perfections, and distributing them among a multiplicity of inferior beings, depraved and unworthy notions of thy moral character have consequently prevailed, and many of the evils of idolatry have been introduced among the professors of that religion, which acknowledges but *one living and true God*, even thee our Father in heaven, and *one mediator, the man Christ Jesus*.

Having divested thee, in their imaginations, of the most amiable of all thy attributes, even the essential *placability* of thy nature, they have represented thy free mercy to penitent sinners as purchased by the blood of thy innocent Son. Forgetting that thou art good to all, and that thy tender mercies are over all thy works, and also that thou, the righteous Lord, lovest righteousness, they have ascribed to thee an arbitrary and unreasonable partiality in favour of some of the human race, and a most cruel and unjust severity towards others, as condemning them to everlasting torments for crimes of which they could not be guilty, and expecting of them that which thou hadst not enabled them to do. And, having lost the idea of the purity of thy nature, and thy regard to moral righteousness as the only just ground of acceptance and favour with thee, they have had recourse to unmeaning and even base and mischievous superstitions as compensations for their non-observance of thy holy commandments.

To confirm all these, and innumerable other corruptions of thy holy religion, supreme authority has been openly usurped by men over that church in which thou hast given all power to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ; and those of thy faithful servants, who have justly refused to submit to their usurpations, have by them been subjected to the greatest hardships, and even persecuted unto death; so that these temporal, anti-christian powers are drunk with the blood of thy holy martyrs.

We deeply lament this almost universal departure from the true faith of thy Son's gospel, the stop that has by this means been so long put to the propagation of Christianity among Jews, Mahometans and Heathens, and the prevalence which it has occasioned of infidelity and profaneness in Christian countries.

But we thank thee, who, in thy own due time, wilt, we doubt not, bring light out of all darkness, and order out of all confusion, that, in several Christian countries, many of these corruptions and abuses have been reformed, and that anti-christian tyranny is every where giving place to the power of truth, and the just liberties of mankind, in thinking and acting for themselves in all matters of religion.

For these great and invaluable blessings we are, under thee, indebted to the strenuous labours of thy faithful servants, who have not accounted even their lives dear unto them; but, for the love of thy truth, have renounced all worldly advantages, boldly asserting their Christian liberty, and holding themselves accountable to none but thee, the sole and immediate Lord of conscience, and to *the great shepherd and bishop of souls*, acting by commission from thee, Jesus Christ.

We adore the wisdom of thy providence in bringing about the restoration of useful learning, and making it subservient to the reformation of thy church; so that thy servants, having recovered the genuine, but long-forgotten sense of the Scriptures, were able to discover the false grounds of the reigning superstition, and of the ecclesiastical tyranny of their times. Grant that, by a continued and diligent study of the same word of thy truth, we may, in due time, be led to the full discovery of every remaining corruption of our holy religion, and be brought to receive the whole truth in the love thereof.

Hasten, we intreat thee, the approach of that glorious time when, according to the faithful and true writings of thy servants the prophets, our holy religion shall recover its primitive purity and efficacy; when thou alone, as the only true God, a Being of perfect rectitude, spotless purity, and essential goodness and mercy, shalt be the object of supreme worship; when thy creatures of mankind shall have recourse to no method of rendering themselves acceptable to thee, but unfeigned repentance for their transgressions of thy laws, and a sincere endeavour to conform to them for the future, in a course of upright intentions and worthy actions, through the whole of their lives; and when no apprehension of arbi-

trary decrees shall alarm the fears of the humble, or encourage the presumption of the confident.

Dispose all who profess the Christian name to study the Scriptures of truth with unprejudiced minds; and inspire all those who attain to the truth with a just zeal for the propagation of it, as far as thy providence shall give them ability and opportunity to do it. May neither the love of popular applause, of filthy lucre, or any worldly advantage—may neither the fear of man, of reproach, or of death—be a snare to them, in this work of love; and may they daily rejoice in the testimony of their consciences, and in the happy fruits of their pious and assiduous labours.

May all those powers of this world, which have usurped any authority belonging to our only rightful Lord and King in his church, become disposed to relinquish their unjust claims; and may those kings and princes, who will not acknowledge the sovereignty of Jesus in his church, and especially those who obstinately oppose the reformation of it, be utterly confounded, and, by his power, be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. Take to thyself, O Lord God Almighty, thy great power, and reign; and may the gospel of Jesus Christ go forth conquering and to conquer. May the everlasting gospel, in its primitive purity, be preached to all that dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people. By the brightness of our Lord's appearance, may the man of sin be utterly consumed, that all the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and may he reign for ever and ever.

In the mean time, may we, thy faithful servants, in the patient waiting for this coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, be fearless and unwearied in asserting thy truth, be ready to lay hold of every favourable opportunity to promote it, and, more especially, be careful to recommend it by a suitable life and conversation. May we distinguish ourselves by having the same mind that was also in Christ Jesus, by genuine humility, meekness, forbearance, brotherly love, heavenly-mindedness, and habitual cheerful devotion; that when our Lord shall return, and take account of his servants, we may be found without spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Now to thee, who alone art eternal, immortal and invisible, the only wise, living and true God, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. Amen.

## THE CONCLUSION.

**THIS** publication completes the scheme which was begun in the *Appeal*, and continued in *The Triumph of Truth*; being intended to be a plain and earnest address to the common people, and especially to those of them who have but little money to spare for the purchase of books, or time for the reading of them.

I am not so little acquainted with human nature, as to expect any great success in this attempt to overturn long-established errors; and least of all can I hope to convince those who refuse to read, or to hear (which is the case with too many), on whom even miracles could produce no effect; but the restoration of Christianity to its primitive purity and efficacy, after so long and so radical a corruption (which was foreseen and lamented by the inspired writers of the New Testament), is so great and so worthy an object, that every man, who has the interest of religion at heart, will rejoice in every opportunity that Divine Providence affords him for promoting it, with respect to ever so few, or even a single individual of his fellow-creatures.

A zeal for the truth, and even to contend earnestly for it, does certainly well become a Christian. Since, however, the inspiring of a Christian spirit is the great purpose to which purity of Christian faith is subservient, I hope that, with respect to myself, I have been careful not to lose the end, while I have been contending for the means. Of this my reader may be a pretty good judge; since that zeal which arises from the love of truth, and of mankind, will easily be distinguished from that spirit which actuates those whom Paul calls the disputers of this world, a spirit which savours strongly of pride, hatred and malice, and which often induces them to have recourse to unfair and unworthy artifices in order to gain a victory.

Some persons think that in these publications I have attacked too many long-established errors, and that it would have been more prudent to have attempted one thing at once, and to have proceeded gradually and gently. But it should be considered, that there are in the world persons in every possible state of mind with respect to these things; so that what will stagger some is calculated to make the strongest and best impression upon others. Since, therefore, every thing that is published from the press must be distributed promiscuously, we can only take care that what we write

be calculated to do good in general ; and since a nice calculation of this kind is exceedingly difficult, it appears to me to be the best, upon the whole, for every person to endeavour to establish what appears to himself to be the whole truth, and not to trouble himself about any consequences. The gospel-sower must cast his seed promiscuously on all kinds of ground, hoping that in some it may yield a good increase, though he must lay his account with its being lost, and even worse than lost, upon others.

I also think it an objection to the slow and cautious proceeding which some persons recommend, that the evidence of any truth is exhibited to the most advantage in connexion with the whole system to which it belongs. Nor would I conclude that, because the minds of many are staggered by bold and undisguised representations of truth, this mode of proceeding is, upon the whole, less effectual. In many cases it may be the only method of gaining a sufficient degree of attention to a subject ; and when this only is done, a great point is gained. The horror with which an offensive sentiment is viewed at first may wear off by degrees, and a cool examination succeed. What could give more offence, even to good minds, than the manner in which Luther, and other reformers, attacked the church of Rome ? Any person would have imagined, *a priori*, that it could only offend and irritate. We must wait a considerable time before we can form a judgment of the number of converts that any person makes.

I cannot help expressing my surprise that so many persons, and especially of the clergy of the Established Church, should profess themselves Arminians, rejecting the Calvinistic doctrines of election and reprobation, and yet entertain such a horror of Arianism or Socinianism, contending with the greatest earnestness for the Divinity of Christ, and atonement for sin by his death ; when it appears to me, that the literal interpretation of the language of Scripture (which is almost all that can be pleaded in favour of any of those opinions) is even more favourable to the former than to the latter, as, I should think, must appear to any person who will attend to those which I have quoted in this treatise. I know that I have found much more difficulty in my attempts to explain them. I consider it, however, as an undoubted sign of the progress of just thinking in matters of religion, that the standard of orthodoxy is so much lower at present than it has been in former times.

Time was, and, though I am not old, I well remember the

time, when Arminians would have been reckoned no better than Socinians \* by those who were reputed the orthodox of their day, and yet with what rage have some of these orthodox writers attacked a brother heretic? How would the manes of those old champions smile to see us fall out by the way, when they were confident that we must all come to the same place of torment at last; and the furious zeal of those veterans was far more plausible and respectable, than that of the modern pretenders to orthodoxy!

There is something striking and consistent in the genuine Supralapsarian system, of the eternally-destined fall of man, an infinite penalty incurred by one, and, by the imputation of his sin, affecting all, and an infinite atonement adequate to it, made by an infinite Being; by which means a small remnant of the human race are necessarily saved, while all the rest of mankind, including new-born children, unbelieving Jews, Mahometans and Heathens, Arminians and Baxterians, Arians and Socinians, without distinction (as destitute either of faith, or the right faith) are consigned to everlasting torments with the Devil and his angels; from whence results glory to a God, who, in all this dreadful scheme, is supposed to have sought nothing else.

These are the tremendous doctrines which have overawed mankind for so many centuries; and, compared with this, all the modern qualified, intermediate systems are crude, incoherent, and contemptible things. My antagonists may cavil at *election* and *reprobation*, or any other single article in the well-compacted system, but every part is necessary to the whole; and if one stone be pushed out of its place, the whole building tumbles to the ground. And when, in consequence of their ill-judged attempts to alter, patch and repair, they have brought things to this catastrophe, there will be nothing left but the simple belief, that the merciful Parent of the Universe, who never meant any thing but the happiness of his creatures, sent his well-beloved Son, "the Man Christ Jesus," to reclaim men from their wickedness, and to teach them the way of righteousness; assuring them for their encouragement, of the

\* There remains a curious proof how both, in a former century, were united in "a railing accusation" with the *Papist*, a *dog*, according to Protestant liberality. On Dr. Owen's tomb in *Bunhill* burial-ground, that eminent divine's prowess in polemical theology, is thus celebrated:

*In illâ viribus plusquam Herculeis, serpentibus tribus  
Arminio, Socino, Cano, venenosa strinxit guttura.*

See the Epitaph in Calamy's *Continuation*, p. 80. Thus Bigotry insults, while Pride flatters on our tombs.

free and unbought pardon of their sins, and promising a life of endless happiness to all that receive and obey the gospel, by repenting of their sins, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

This is the essence of what is called Socinianism ; and though this simple doctrine may, on account of its excellence and simplicity, be a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others, I believe it to be the sum and substance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the wisdom and power of God.

Formidable as the greatest adversary of the truth may be, I make no doubt but that, by the help of reason, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, it will be finally overcome. And whenever *the holy apostles and prophets shall rejoice* at the fall of this last part of *myetical* Babylon, Rev. xviii. 20, happy will they be who may join the chorus, as having employed their efforts, however feeble, with those who, in this great cause, fight under *the banners of the Lamb*, and who “are called, and chosen and faithful ;” Rev. xvii. 14.

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END OF VOLUME II.

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